

EXPRESSION, CREATION, AND DISCOVERY

TOWARD A SYNTHESIZED PROCESSUAL ACCOUNT OF ART AND ITS COGNITIVE, MORAL, AND SOCIAL VALUE

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ABSTRACT

Recent analytic philosophy of art has largely shifted its attention away from accounting for the nature of art in general, and similarly has let questions of artistic value and the cultural importance of art be eclipsed by epistemological, linguistic, and ontological puzzles about artworks and practices. My dissertation shows why a general theory of art and its value is still important, arguing for its relevance for art practice and for the need for philosophers of art to continue such theorizing alongside more specialized inquiries. Specifically, I develop the foundations of a revitalized expression-based account of art by drawing on and synthesizing common positions found in four early 20th-century thinkers—R.G. Collingwood, John Dewey, Henri Bergson, and Simone de Beauvoir—who span the Anglo-American/Continental divide and who are rarely, if ever, considered alongside one another.

The account I develop from their views conceives of artworks processually, i.e., in terms of interactions between artists and their media, rather than only focusing on the objects resulting from these interactions. Activities of encountering, engaging with, and understanding art are similarly conceived in terms of the interactions between audiences and artworks and, via the artworks, between audiences and artists. One virtue of this account is its explanatory value for artistic practice. Another is that it offers a unified theory on which art's potential cognitive, moral, and social values are all grounded on the same element of art's nature as expression, where this element involves artistic creation's dual status as both the creation and the discovery of new forms: not only new perceptual forms but also new cognitive and affective forms. In other words, creating art *qua* expression involves both discovering and creating new ways of seeing, feeling, and understanding, where this grounds art's cultural importance and its value for human life, both individually and communally.

RÉSUMÉ

Les développements récents en philosophie analytique de l'art ont dans une large mesure délaissé le projet de rendre compte de la nature de l'art en général, et ont semblablement laissé les questions de la valeur artistique et de l'importance culturelle de l'art être éclipsées par des énigmes épistémologiques, linguistiques et ontologiques concernant les œuvres d'art et les pratiques artistiques. Ma thèse montre pourquoi une théorie générale de l'art et de sa valeur est toujours importante, en démontrant sa pertinence pour la pratique de l'art et la nécessité pour les philosophes de l'art de continuer à élaborer de telles théories aux côtés de questionnements plus spécialisés. Plus précisément, je développe les fondements requis pour revitaliser une théorie de l'art basée sur l'expression en m'appuyant sur les positions communes trouvées chez trois penseurs et une penseuse du début du XX^e siècle—R.G. Collingwood, John Dewey, Henri Bergson et Simone de Beauvoir—et en synthétisant leurs pensées, lesquelles traversent le fossé anglo-américain / continental et sont rarement, voire jamais, considérées côte à côte.

La théorie que je développe à partir de leurs positions conçoit les œuvres d'art comme des processus, c'est-à-dire comme des interactions entre les artistes et leurs médias, plutôt que de se concentrer uniquement sur les objets résultant de ces interactions. Les activités que sont la rencontre et la compréhension de l'art, ainsi que l'engagement avec celui-ci, sont semblablement conçues en termes d'interactions entre le public et les œuvres d'art et, par le moyen des œuvres d'art, entre le public et les artistes. L'une des vertus de cette théorie est sa valeur explicative pour la pratique artistique. Une autre vertu est qu'elle constitue une théorie unifiée sur laquelle les potentielles valeurs cognitives, morales et sociales de l'art sont toutes fondées; c'est-à-dire que ces valeurs sont fondées sur le même élément de la nature de l'art, en l'occurrence, l'expression. Cet élément implique un double statut pour la création artistique, celui de la création et de la découverte de nouvelles formes: non seulement de nouvelles formes perceptuelles, mais aussi de nouvelles formes cognitives et affectives. En d'autres termes, créer de l'art, conçu comme une forme d'expression, implique à la fois la découverte et la création de nouvelles façons de voir, de ressentir et de comprendre, ce qui fonde l'importance culturelle de l'art et sa valeur pour la vie humaine, à la fois au niveau individuel et collectif.

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Finally, I am grateful to Teresa Smith for permission to quote from Collingwood's unpublished *Libellus de Generatione*, and Oliver House of Oxford's Bodleian Library for facilitating my access to the Collingwood archives on my research visit in 2017.

1. INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Outline of the Project

This dissertation seeks to answer three philosophical questions that arise from the experience and practice of making and engaging with art. These are: (i) When does something that is made or done in a medium traditionally associated with art—e.g., a poem, painting, film, song, dance, etc.—count as a work of art rather than a mere artifact or set of actions? (ii) What makes artworks valuable, both in the sense of what we can call their artistic value—i.e., what makes a work good *qua* art, or one work better or worse *qua* art than another—and in the sense of their being valuable to make and engage with? (iii) What relation, if any, obtains between what makes something a work of art and what makes art valuable. In other words, what is art, why is it important, and how does what it is matter for why it is important (and vice versa)?

Specifically, I aim to do this by developing an account of the nature of artworks, their creation and reception, and their value that draws on and synthesizes the views of four thinkers—R.G. Collingwood, John Dewey, Henri Bergson, and Simone de Beauvoir—whose ideas are compatible, and on many points strikingly similar, but who are not often considered together, especially on the subject of art. Both Collingwood and Dewey wrote books on art that are well known in Anglo-American aesthetics, although neither one's thought is as prominent as it once was—and, in Collingwood's case, remains subject to systematic misconstrual—, leaving the potential contribution of their ideas to current philosophical work on art underdeveloped and undervalued. De Beauvoir's writings on art are largely unknown even among continental and feminist philosophers familiar with her other work, although they contain insights that merit consideration by philosophers of art. And while Bergson has influenced art history, literary

theory, and cultural studies, he never explicitly sets out a philosophy of art, despite using examples of artists and artworks to illustrate his ideas about time, life, biological creation, and the mode of awareness he calls intuition.

It might be asked: why consider these four thinkers, who wrote decades ago and in different philosophical traditions, alongside one another as a way of better understanding art, especially when two did not write extensively or directly on aesthetics? And: why should I want to develop or defend a general theory of art today when this seems out of step with the tendency of philosophical aesthetics in the last few decades, and in light of certain arguments against the need or usefulness of doing so? The second question will be addressed later, at the start of Chapter 5; to answer the first, a brief word on the origins of my project is in order.

I initially planned for my dissertation to defend Collingwood's philosophy of art against critiques of his aesthetics for allegedly holding an idealist theory of artworks as mental objects existing only in people's heads. This would have been done by: (i) re-reading passages of Collingwood's *The Principles of Art* (1938; hereafter *PA*) that are often cited in support of the idealist reading in the context of other passages that tend to be overlooked; (ii) reconsidering *The Principles* in the context of Collingwood's wider philosophy, including unpublished manuscripts that call into question his alleged idealism; and (iii) re-contextualizing his thought in relation to non-idealist philosophers of the time such as Bergson, James, and Dewey, with whose thinking Collingwood's own bears several strong—and under-acknowledged—affinities.

It became apparent that this project was larger in scope than was desirable for a dissertation, as it involved what were properly *two* research projects, one on Collingwood's aesthetics and the other on his place in 20th century philosophy. I recalled that my engagement with Collingwood began as an interest in his theory of art and its potential to usefully inform artistic practices of creation and reception, with this occurring to me around the time I was struck by the similarities between Collingwood's account of art and Dewey's *Art as Experience* (1934; hereafter *AE*).¹ I

¹ See Eldridge 2010 for an overview of Dewey's aesthetics that, without mentioning Collingwood, emphasises many of the points in Dewey's theory that are shared with Collingwood's on the reading for which I argue in Chapter 2.

also noticed that the view of art held in common by these two is implicit in de Beauvoir's reflections on the nature and importance of literature and is presupposed by Bergson's use of examples of artworks and the artistic process in his accounts of life, novelty, and intuition. I soon realized that if these four thinkers had each developed—or were thinking along lines that pointed toward—a common view of art and its value, and if it was this view itself that first kindled my interest in Collingwood and which still interested me, it made sense to focus on this common view of art, both as it features in these thinkers' works and as an account in its own right.²

This common view understands artworks in processual terms, with 'work' including what artists do when working with their mediums and not only the finished object that is produced as a result of this working that audiences encounter, and with such objects—e.g., paintings, sculptures, films, musical scores or recordings of performances, etc.—not being treated separately from the processes and activities by which they came to be, but always in relation to these activities as both a material trace of, and a phase of, the artist's creative process. Specifically, this view takes these processes and activities to be ones of expression, with 'expression' understood not as the externalization of an inner state of the artist's but as the clarification and articulation, or disclosure, of the qualitative or felt dimension of some experience, as worked out and embodied in the artist's chosen medium, thereby allowing others to apprehend what this experience was like. On this view the artist's expressive activity—i.e., her working out and articulating the felt or qualitative component of an experience through her interaction with her medium—is a process of both discovery and creation, with artists discovering what an experience is like to have (feel, perceive, etc.) by bringing into being a new way of feeling, perceiving, etc., and artworks being creations in a robust sense, with artists adding to the 'furniture of the world' rather than merely re-arranging it.

The idea of art-making being a process of both discovery and creation might at first seem contradictory, as it may be thought that something that is discovered must have pre-existed its

² This common view goes beyond, but remains compatible with, Collingwood's and Dewey's own accounts of art, with the contributions of each of the thinkers I synthesize adding to or fleshing out what any one of them wrote on their own.

discovery and so cannot be created by the one who discovers it. This apparent contradiction will be addressed as part of my explication of the common view in Chapter 5. As I explain there, the apparent tension between creation and discovery only holds if one presupposes an ontology of stable and static objects, with change being a matter of the substitution or replacement of one state or thing, existing at an earlier time, for a different state or thing at a later time.³ However, on the dynamic and process-oriented ontology held by the thinkers whose ideas I synthesize, for which change can be a matter of the internal, continuous development of a thing or state—i.e., a process of becoming rather than of replacement—, there is no contradiction in something’s being discovered by the same act that brings it into being or creates it. The processual orientation found in Collingwood, Dewey, and de Beauvoir can plausibly be traced back to the common influence of Bergson’s thinking on theirs,⁴ sometimes via an intermediary thinker such as William James in the case of Dewey. While this does not make each of these philosophers a ‘Bergsonist’, it does involve each holding a view of reality as not only fundamentally temporal and evolving, but as growing and actualizing itself through, in the words of A.W. Moore, “the ceaseless creation of novelty” (Moore 2021, 415).

The common view is not only an account of what artworks are, but also contains an account of their value, with respect both to artistic value, or what makes an artwork good or bad *qua* art, and to the value of art, i.e., why artworks are important or worthwhile to create and to engage with as spectators, listeners, readers, etc. Notably, it offers a unified account of these ontological and axiological aspects, according to which both artistic value and the ways in which art can have cognitive, moral, and social or political value are grounded in, and follow from, what art is.

³ Cf. James 1909, 779, and the metaphysical view he calls the “block universe”.

⁴ The processual orientation of Collingwood’s thought is not often recognized, but is made clear in an unpublished handwritten manuscript, once thought to be lost, for a short book entitled *Libellus de Generatione: An Essay in Absolute Empiricism* (1920), in which he presents a sustained argument for an ontology of ‘becoming’ over an ontology of ‘being’. The importance of this work—e.g., for challenging the received view of Collingwood being an idealist—will be discussed further below, although the fact that it is unpublished, with the single copy being contained in the Collingwood archives at Oxford’s Bodleian Library, limits me to referencing the ideas therein only sparingly. The influence of Bergson on Collingwood’s thought, also under-recognized, can be seen in the references to Bergson scattered throughout his philosophical works, but is similarly more apparent in the unpublished material in the Bodleian’s archive, such as in Collingwood’s lecture notes.

As such, developing this account by foregrounding its elements in the thought of Collingwood, Dewey, Bergson, and de Beauvoir, and by synthesizing their ideas to form a single, unified account, holds implications for contemporary debates on a wide range of issues in the philosophy of art, some of which will be addressed towards the end of this dissertation with others being left as topics for future scholarly work.

Given the nature of my project, the chapters of this dissertation are organized in a way that is likely to be different from the typical organization of a doctoral thesis in philosophy insofar as they are not related to each other as progressive steps in a single, linear argument. Instead, the dissertation is divided into two parts: Part I contains three chapters (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) that each focus on a particular issue in the work of one or two of the thinkers mentioned above; Part II also contains three chapters (Chapters 5, 6, and 7) which bring together the ideas of these thinkers as foregrounded and clarified in Part I in order to set out the common view, situate it in relation to other current views in the philosophy of art, and consider its implications for art's value and its explanatory value for artistic practice. While each of the chapters in Part I is meant to work both on its own and as part of the whole dissertation, the chapters in Part II are interconnected and are meant to work in the context of Part I. As such, the connections between the three earlier chapters may not always be apparent or made explicit until Part II. One benefit of this approach is that, by engaging with a broad range of issues and thinkers on the way to developing an account of art that is meant to contribute to contemporary philosophical aesthetics, my dissertation also makes original contributions to the scholarship on the thinkers I am working with and on their (in some cases implicit) theories of art.

Beginning Part I, Chapter 2 renews existing defences of Collingwood's expression-based theory of art (e.g., Ridley 1997) against the 'ideal theory' reading popularized by Richard Wollheim (1972; 1980) by approaching it through the dual lens of Dewey's theory of inquiry and his notion of qualitative thought. I argue that Collingwood's account of expression maps onto, and counts as, a form of Deweyan inquiry whereby artists inquire into the qualitative dimensions of experience through their engagement with a medium, with artworks embodying the felt

qualities and the understandings thereof in the medium in which they are worked out (i.e., expressed) as traces of the artist's process of expressing which are at the same time the results of her inquiry. This way of reading Collingwood not only helps to support a non-idealist interpretation of the passages that are most often given in support of the ideal theory reading, but it highlights the 'cognitive' dimension of his aesthetics, which can easily get overlooked amidst his talk of feelings and emotions and which distinguishes his own account from Romantic theories of expression. As well, it paves the way for the notion of expression as a kind of disclosure that is part of the account of artworks as both creations and discoveries that will be developed in Chapter 5.

In Chapter 3, I turn my focus to Bergson and examine the many references to artworks and artists' creative processes found in *Creative Evolution* (1907; hereafter *CE*), which are used as examples to illustrate several of his ideas, including those of time as duration, of life's relation to matter, of biological novelty as it emerges through the development of a vital impetus or *élan vital*, and of 'intuition' as a mode of direct cognition of things 'from the inside', i.e., from within their durational unfolding. I argue that the analogies Bergson develops between artistic creation, duration, organic life, and evolution work both ways, as they presuppose a certain conception of art which allows Bergson's philosophies of temporality and organism to be read back into and inform a developed account of art. On this account, artworks and artistic creation are understood to parallel the organization and development of living organisms, with the human drive to create art and, more broadly, to communicate for non-instrumental purposes ultimately being seen to stem from the vital impetus towards continual growth and expansion that Bergson takes to be at the core of life in all its forms. In other words, on the account that I show to be implicit in Bergson's examples, art is held to be an extension and continuation of life itself wherein matter is organized and 'animated' with vital meaning and sense.

Chapter 4 considers the question of art's political dimension and the extent to which artists have a responsibility for the political content of their works, including the choice to remain silent on political matters, by critically examining Jean-Paul Sartre's argument that good literature

must be ‘committed’ to furthering the ends of social liberation in light of de Beauvoir’s conception of literature and its value, as expressed primarily in her essay “Literature and Metaphysics” (1946). While de Beauvoir does not respond directly to Sartre’s position, she develops a view that runs counter to, and is more plausible and coherent than, Sartre’s own. I show that, where Sartre subordinates the value of literature to its political value and sees prose literature as essentially a tool for delivering the right political messages, de Beauvoir takes *good* literature to involve a process of discovery on the part of the writer that precludes authors from using literature to illustrate or promote their pre-formed views and ideas, and instead requires writers to develop and express new understandings and new perspectives through their engagement with their medium. The chapter concludes by arguing that de Beauvoir’s approach to engaged art is ‘authentic’ by existentialist standards, insofar as it is an exercise of human freedom that remains connected to the ‘facticity’ of the historical moment and the medium, in contrast to Sartre’s conception, which I show to be in ‘bad faith’. In the context of my dissertation, the importance of this chapter lies not so much in whether or not an approach to engaged art is authentic, but in the interconnected cognitive, moral, and social values that art can realize on the creative discovery model, and in setting the stage for expression to be read along the lines of de Beauvoir’s notion of disclosure.

Turning to Part II, Chapter 5 brings together the ideas explicated and argued for in the previous three chapters in order to develop the common, synthesized account of art as creative discovery on which those chapters converge. The chapter begins with a consideration of the value of developing such an account of art, arguing against Dominic Lopes (2008; 2014) that a general account is useful, and even necessary, alongside accounts of individual artforms, and against Morris Weitz (1956) that a theory of art is still possible despite ‘art’ being an open concept. After establishing the legitimacy of the project, I set out the common account of the nature of artworks and of artistic creation and reception, and explain why the claims that artworks are created and that they are discovered are compatible. As well, I show how this account can avoid the most common objections to expression-based theories of art, and clarify

the scope of the account by distinguishing between works in a medium commonly associated with artistic expression—e.g., works of literature or of music, paintings, films, etc.—and those works that are *artworks*. In Chapter 6 I discuss how the account compares with other currently prominent accounts of what artworks are in analytic aesthetics. These include ‘aesthetic’ definitions of art proposed by Monroe Beardsley and Nick Zangwill, the ‘historical’ definition of art put forth by Jerrold Levinson, and family-resemblance or cluster approaches of the sort argued for by Berys Gaut, along with Gregory Currie’s and David Davies’s accounts of artworks as, respectively, action types and performances. (The relation of my account to the institutional theories of art of, e.g., Arthur Danto and George Dickie is discussed in both Chapters 5 and 6.) Once the account is outlined and situated, Chapter 7 considers how it can explain both artistic value and the ways in which art can have cognitive, moral, and social value, as well as exploring how this account has explanatory value and can be applied to inform artistic practice. In a brief conclusion I note some of the directions for future research and inquiry that are suggested by this account, both as a theory in its own right and as connected to the thought of Collingwood, Dewey, Bergson, and de Beauvoir.

Apart from the organization of the chapters, another way my dissertation might differ from others typical of the discipline is that my aim is not to attempt to prove—e.g., through deductive argument—that the synthesized account I develop is the single most-correct theory of art and its value, nor do I attempt to explore the implications this account has for the full range of debates and issues currently being discussed by philosophers of art, since either would take more space than I have, as well as a fair amount of hubris. Rather, my (more modest) aim is to work out the fundamental elements of the view of art and its value that I see implicit in, and common to, the work of the thinkers on whom I draw in a way that at least shows this account to be plausible, coherent, and philosophically interesting. Explicating the fundamentals of the account is a first step toward going on, in future work, to argue for the account against other, established theories and to explore its implications for a number of issues in the philosophy of art.

1.2 Metaphilosophical and Methodological Considerations

The pursuit of any philosophical project will presuppose some notion of what philosophy is and what it is to ‘do’ philosophy; however, these presuppositions seem rarely to be made explicit, with what counts as a philosophical project not often being discussed outside the specialized field of metaphilosophy. Leaving one’s metaphilosophical presuppositions implicit assumes that readers will either already share them or will be able easily to recognize them from what one writes, which risks being misunderstood or misevaluated if readers assume that one is trying to do something other than what one is in fact aiming to do. That is, in order to understand and properly evaluate a work of philosophy one must know what ‘game’ is being played: what looks like a bad or illegal move in what one takes to be a chess match might be legal and strategic if one is in fact watching a variant game using the same board and pieces. Since the approach I am taking here likely differs from what is currently customary in philosophy with respect to more than just the organization of chapters, it is worth stating upfront what this approach involves and making explicit the metaphilosophical and methodological principles that underlie it.

1.2.1 A ‘Synthetic’ Approach to Philosophy

My dissertation engages with thinkers from different philosophical traditions, especially from outside the mainstream of what is called analytic philosophy, but does so in order to develop a position that is put in dialogue with, and considered against, recent work in analytic philosophy of art. In drawing on philosophers from the early twentieth century and recovering aspects of their thought that have something to offer contemporary aesthetics, my project includes elements of an historical approach to philosophy—e.g., the reconstructive explication of ideas in a text, considered in the context in which that text was written—without fully fitting the conception of what it is to ‘do history of philosophy’ as sometimes distinguished from ‘doing philosophy’. In these respects, my project involves a hybrid of several approaches to philosophical inquiry, sharing some elements of these approaches without sharing them all. For example, I not only engage with views in analytic aesthetics but share what is often cited as a common feature of

analytic philosophy: a commitment to clarity, precision of thought, and ease of understanding (see Heil 1999, 26; Babich 2003, 67);⁵ however, my approach does not take philosophy to be essentially a matter of conceptual or linguistic analysis, and does not privilege natural scientific or mathematical/logical methods of inquiry.⁶

At the same time, my approach fits certain broad conceptions of what counts as a ‘continental’ approach to philosophy, such as Simon Critchley’s talk of bridging what he calls the gap between knowledge and wisdom to address all dimensions of human experience (see Critchley 2001, 1-11), or Alia Al-Saji’s notion of continental philosophy as “a way of enabling thinking, a style or dimension according to which one thinks, sees, and even lives” (Al-Saji 2012, 352) which includes the tendency to create “dimension[s] according to which we see and think”, and hence “according to which experiences and events come to be differentiated and can thereby be connected in new ways” (*Ibid.*, 355-356, emphasis removed). However, my approach is unlike many typical works in continental philosophy in that I do not follow one of the methods native to continental philosophies—e.g., phenomenology, deconstruction, critical theory, psychoanalysis, etc.—and I do not stay within or adhere to the overall system of thought of any of the ‘continental’ thinkers on whose works I draw.

Insofar as labels and classifications can be useful, my hybrid approach could be called ‘synthetic philosophy’,⁷ since: (i) it is more concerned with understanding phenomena in the

⁵ Provided, of course, one keeps in mind Aristotle’s point about the degree of clarity or precision that can be expected for different subject-matters, such that one cannot expect the kind of clarity or precision that can be obtained in, say, mathematics, to be possible for every type of inquiry (see *NE* I.3 1094b13-27, I.7 1098a26-33).

⁶ Michael Dummett, for instance, defines analytic philosophy as “the belief, first, that a philosophical account of thought can be attained through a philosophical account of language, and, secondly, that a comprehensive account can only be so attained” (Dummett 1993, 4; cf. Heil 1999, 26).

⁷ ‘Synthetic philosophy’ in my sense differs from, although has ‘family resemblances’ to, previous uses of the term. For instance, C.S. Peirce, following Herbert Spencer, uses the term to refer to philosophical inquiry that “embraces all that truth which is derivable by collating the results of the different special sciences, but which is too broad to be perfectly established by any one of them” (Peirce 1906, 372-373), which is more or less the definition Eric Schliesser (2019) gives to the term in a recent article. Jeffrey Bell, Andrew Cutrofello and Paul Livingston (2016) use the term to refer to the papers collected in their edited volume, describing synthetic philosophy as “a cosmopolitan endeavor [that] draws centrally on problems, methods, and results of both [analytic and continental] traditions to produce new work across a variety of areas” (Bell et al. 2016, 2, emphasis removed). My sense of the term is compatible with this, although I would include perspectives, methods, and results from traditions in philosophy beyond the analytic and continental traditions (e.g. pragmatism, or non-western philosophies), and

world than with analyzing the meaning or logical structure of concepts or propositions, and so deals with what Kant (1787) calls ‘synthetic’ as opposed to ‘analytic’ judgments; (ii) it avoids ‘analysis’ understood as decomposing wholes into parts and treating these parts as atomic entities; and (iii) it focuses on synthesizing different ideas about art into a broader common perspective that encompasses and transcends each one of these ideas. In this last respect, what I am calling a ‘synthetic’ approach to philosophy most resembles what Hans-Georg Gadamer calls a “fusion of horizons” (Gadamer 1989, 304ff), being the development of a synoptic perspective on a subject-matter or phenomenon through the merging of multiple specific or ‘local’ perspectives on it, where this merging of perspectives can elucidate, add to, and change what any one perspective offers when taken on its own.

These perspectives do not have to oppose each other for this fusion to be productive, as the synthesis here is not necessarily produced by the clash of a thesis with its antithesis. Similar and compatible theories, developed independently by different thinkers, can fuse to form a more comprehensive account that is likely to be stronger and more defensible than any of these theories taken independently, insofar as elements of one perspective can fill in gaps left open by another perspective or give ways of responding to objections against one theory for which that theory on its own does not have the resources. In this respect, the approach can allow us to gain a more comprehensive way of conceptualizing a phenomenon that we wish to understand than any one perspective can give us, in a way that is analogous to the folktale of the blind men and the elephant, where each correctly apprehends a different part of the elephant but errs in mistaking this part for the whole creature.

This approach, then, does more than simply note where different philosophers’ accounts agree: it uses points of agreement and compatibility as a basis to develop an enhanced formulation of what is common to their views. The goal of such a synthetic approach is not to

from various ‘special sciences’ (e.g., art history for philosophical aesthetics), or any perspectives drawn from reflections on lived experience, as possible candidates for synthesis. However, the papers in Bell et al. tend to merely apply an analytic method to an issue raised by a continental philosopher, or vice versa, and so do not actually synthesize the methods of both traditions, as Ralph Shain (2018) notes.

appeal to an agreement between thinkers to prove the truth of their commonly-held view—since an argument to the effect that ‘philosophers X, Y, and Z agree that P; therefore P’ would be obviously invalid—but to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon in question.⁸ This is in keeping with Collingwood’s own methodology, as expressed in the preface and introduction to *The Principles of Art*, where he states that he “do[es] not think of aesthetic theory as an attempt to investigate and expound eternal verities concerning the nature of an eternal object called Art”, but instead as an attempt “to clarify and systematize ideas we already possess” relating to art (*PA*, vi, 1). Developing a synoptic or comprehensive perspective on some subject is appropriate for such an attempt insofar as one’s ideas will be clarified by their reflective and critical fusion with other perspectives, and insofar as having a more expansive ‘horizon’ better enables one to relate, modify, and combine one’s own understanding of a subject with the ways in which others have understood it, as well as to grasp how the subject is related to other phenomena and facets of experience that are brought to attention, or ‘disclosed’, by this broadened perspective.

As such, my approach is not merely to treat certain thinkers’ views as separate accounts and map the relations between them, but to *think with* these figures about art in a way that draws on their ideas, as and when they are useful for, or can illuminate, my own thinking at a particular place in my project. In the course of this project I will occasionally refer to a philosopher’s ideas without always defending or arguing for them, where I do this to show how strands from these philosophers’ thoughts have influenced—or perhaps fused with⁹—my own thinking. Ultimately, the ‘proof’ of these ideas’ usefulness will be the plausibility and explanatory value of the account that is developed from their synthesis.

⁸ Since what I am calling synthetic philosophy is meant to be one among many possible ways of ‘doing’ philosophy, and not the *only* way to do it, nothing prevents this from being the first step in a larger project of trying to give a definitive proof of a conclusion through other non-‘synthetic’ methods of argument, if that were one’s aim.

⁹ While I do not take the idea of influence to be inherently problematic, it is worth noting that Collingwood, in *The Principles of Art*, takes the idea of artistic influence to be tied to what he calls ‘aesthetic individualism’ and prefers to speak of a collaboration between artists, past and contemporary, seeing their works as part of a collective effort to articulate the felt qualities of experience in all its dimensions (see *PA*, 318). I hope to have captured something of the collaborative sense of this idea, as applied to philosophy, by stressing the phrase ‘*thinking with*’ above.

1.2.2 A Pragmatist Expansion of the Pragmatic Constraint

One reason for taking this kind of ‘synthetic’ approach is that it makes it easier to avoid getting stuck in any one established viewpoint, or the presuppositions thereof, and being unduly limited in how one can understand and explain artworks, their creation, and their value, as can happen if one’s thinking stays within a single theoretical framework or paradigm. Another way to avoid not being able to see beyond the bounds or scope of a particular theory is to ground one’s thinking in experience of the phenomenon one is trying to understand and to require any theory of that phenomenon to cohere with this experience. This is not to say that further thinking and critical reflection on a phenomenon cannot revise one’s pre-theoretical understanding of it—i.e., that one cannot come to realize that how one first interpreted one’s experience was mistaken—, but that any reflective or ‘post-theoretical’ understanding must be an understanding *of the phenomenon* that is encountered through experience, rather than an understanding that substitutes a theoretical construct for the experienced phenomenon and so misleads or obscures our thinking about what we set out to understand—and what we take ourselves to have understood.

This principle that theory must be coherent with experience is in keeping with Collingwood’s insistence that philosophizing *well* about art requires both a “material” and a “formal” criterion in his discussion of what he calls “artist-aestheticians” and “philosopher-aestheticians” (*PA*, 3-4). Of the former, consisting of “artists [or, equally, art critics] with a leaning towards philosophy”, he writes that they know, from experience, what they are talking about—i.e., they have a material criterion for their claims—but that they may not talk about it clearly. On the other hand, he takes the latter, who have come to reflect on art on the background of a general training in philosophy and so have a formal criterion for what makes claims logically coherent and inferences valid, to be “admirably protected against talking nonsense” but with no assurance “that they will know what they are talking about” (*Ibid.*, 3). While it might seem that he is classifying everyone who philosophizes about art as being of one sort or the other and treating these as exclusive, it is clear from the context that he is talking about two extreme

tendencies in order to advocate for the importance of those who engage in the philosophy of art having and applying both material and formal criteria in their inquiries, i.e., knowing what they are talking about and knowing how to talk about it clearly.¹⁰

Collingwood's call for a material criterion in making and assessing philosophical claims about art, gained either from first-hand practical experience with art or from a second-hand engagement with practitioners—e.g., talking to artists, critics, curators, art historians, etc., to find out 'what goes on' in these practices, i.e., what sorts of things they do and why, and how they understand what they do—is similar in spirit to the principle David Davies calls the "pragmatic constraint" (Davies 2004, 16-23; see also Davies 2009; Davies 2017). This is a methodological claim about the relation of ontology of art to art practice that holds the former "answerable to" the latter, i.e., to "those features of our creative, critical, appreciative, and individuating practice in the arts that would withstand rational scrutiny" (Davies 2004, 18). Davies goes on to clarify that this means "[a]rtworks must be entities that can bear the sorts of properties rightly ascribed to what are termed 'works' in our reflective critical and appreciative practice; that are individuated in the way such 'works' are or would be individuated, and that have the modal properties that are reasonably ascribed to 'works,' in that practice" (*Ibid.*), and offers a briefer paraphrase that is meant to be equivalent: "[a]rtworks must be conceived ontologically in such a way as to accord with those features of our critical and appreciative practice upheld on rational reflection" (*Ibid.*, 23). Since he counts reflection on critical, appreciative, and individuating artistic practices as part of the epistemology of art, Davies ultimately takes the pragmatic constraint to position ontology of art as logically secondary, and answerable to, epistemology of art, so understood (*Ibid.*, 22-23; Davies 2009, 161-63).

It is beyond the scope of this introduction to get into the debate surrounding Davies's specific version of the pragmatic constraint;¹¹ however, it is generally agreed that "a definition of

¹⁰ For instance, he goes on to write of "a third class of aesthetic theorists", viz. art practitioners or those with artistic backgrounds who have gained a 'formal criterion' by "tak[ing] the trouble to train themselves in philosophy or psychology or both" (*Ibid.*, 4). Although he does not mention people with philosophical training who take up and learn artistic practices, it follows that he would accept this as another way of coming to have both formal and material criteria for philosophizing about art.

‘artwork’ must be assessed in terms of the sense it makes of our overall artistic practice, while acknowledging that features of that practice are themselves open to critical assessment” (Davies 2004, 18-19, paraphrasing Stecker 1997, 26), even if some claim that Davies’s own formulation of the pragmatic constraint “is *not* generally accepted, but rather is quite controversial” (Stecker 2009, 385, original emphasis). Guy Rohrbaugh, for instance, notes this current widespread agreement amongst aestheticians that accounts of art “are constrained in some way by the practice of art itself” such that, if an account “were not consistent with and responsive to [the] phenomena [that comprise artistic practices i.e., what artists, spectators, or critics do, and the things they engage or interact with in their doings], one would lose the right to claim that it was artworks that one was giving an account of in the first place” (Rohrbaugh 2013, 29-30).

What Rohrbaugh and Stecker note is widely agreed upon is more general than either Davies’s pragmatic constraint or Collingwood’s call for a material criterion, since it does not specify what it is for a theory to be constrained by or responsive to practice. While I take Collingwood’s and Davies’s methodological claims to be largely compatible, although not equivalent, what is important to note for the present project is that Davies’s principle is narrower in scope insofar as it is meant to apply to the ontology of art, whereas Collingwood’s applies to all philosophical or reflective thinking about art. Moreover, by ‘ontology’ here Davies means theorizing not just about the nature of art or how artworks can be defined, but about what metaphysical *kinds* of entity artworks are, and so it is this even narrower field of inquiry that his pragmatic constraint takes to be constrained by and answerable to rational reflection on creative and appreciative practices. If efforts to define ‘artwork’ are themselves instances of rational reflection on how we individuate the things that we take artists to make and audiences to encounter, and if attempts to explain art’s value are similarly part of what it is to rationally reflect on our evaluative and appreciative practices, then the pragmatic constraint as Davies formulates it will not apply to the areas of philosophy of art with which my project is most

¹¹ For objections to, or worries about, the pragmatic constraint see, e.g., Dodd 2007, 205-07, 267-68; Dodd 2013, 1050-51, 1058; Stecker 2009, 376-78, 385. For responses that clarify just what the pragmatic constraint is committed to, see Davies 2009; Davies 2017.

directly concerned, since these areas are what the principle takes to constrain another area, viz., ontology, and not to be subject themselves to this constraint.

A reformulation of the pragmatic constraint that would apply to philosophy of art more widely than just to questions of what metaphysical kind(s) artworks count as, and so could hold as a methodological principle of my current project, is suggested by noting how a material criterion drawn from experience might inform one's philosophical theorizing about art. Since Collingwood takes statements and assertions to be answers to particular questions and to be logically evaluable as such (Collingwood 1939, 31), we might understand a statement—or a set of statements, e.g., a philosophical theory—that is made on the basis of a material criterion to be an answer to a question that arises from experience of the phenomenon which the statement is about, whereas a statement that lacks a material criterion would be the answer to a question that does not arise from experience, i.e., one that we might call 'purely theoretical'. Similarly, one with a material criterion would be able to evaluate the claims and theories of others for how well they cohere with or map onto the phenomenon they purport to explain, based on her experience of that phenomenon, whereas someone who lacked a material criterion would be limited to evaluating a theory for its logical coherence or validity, or for how it accords with some other theory or body of accepted thought.

This call for philosophical questions about art to arise from, and relate back to, concrete experiences of art can be used to formulate an expanded pragmatic constraint specifying that *any position or conclusion argued for in the philosophy of art (i) should work as a possible answer to a question that could arise for a philosophically reflective practitioner from their artistic practice,¹² and (ii) should have the potential to make some concrete difference for how that practice is pursued or for how art is engaged with and experienced.* This formulation ensures that philosophy of art is grounded in practice by requiring any philosophical account or argument to take its object from first-order artistic practice—i.e., from the activities of artists or percipients

¹² By a 'philosophically reflective practitioner' I mean one who is intellectually curious and wonders about the nature of their practice and its objects, how these 'hang together' with or relate to other dimensions of their experience, etc., and not necessarily one who applies established ideas from theory or philosophy to their practice.

of art—so that, for example, any ontological theory of what artworks are that accords with this revised constraint necessarily will be about what it is that some artist has made or what audiences members have engaged with, where this ensures that philosophical thinking does not change the subject from what it purports to be explaining.

This expanded pragmatic constraint has closer ties to philosophical pragmatism than does Davies's constraint. For one thing, it aligns with William James's discussion of percepts and concepts in *Some Problems of Philosophy* (1910), wherein he argues that every concept or idea arises, at some point, from 'percepts', i.e., from affective and sensory experience of the dynamic flux of the perceptible world (James 1910, 1023). For James, conceptual thought or intellection involves relating concepts that have been abstracted from percepts, e.g., by making comparisons, drawing inferences, etc. (*Ibid.*, 1008-09). What he calls the 'abuse of concepts' results from assuming the relations that thought draws between concepts, and the inferences that are made on the basis of these relations, will also hold of the objects of experience from which these concepts were abstracted (*Ibid.*, 1018). Since the relations that thought draws between concepts can be internally coherent while failing to map onto the relations found in experience, the only way to be sure that one has not abused concepts is to hold theoretical conclusions answerable to future experience by seeing if they actually do map onto and cohere with this experience. By calling for philosophical thinking about art to cohere both with the experiences that shape our conceptions of art and with future experiences of art, the expanded pragmatic constraint aims to avoid the 'abuse of concepts' in the philosophy of art by ensuring that the questions asked, and the theories offered as answers, are related to actual artistic practices.

The expanded pragmatic constraint accords not only with this element of James's thought, but also with the relationship between philosophy and experience for which Dewey argues in the opening chapter of *Experience and Nature* (1925; hereafter *EN*). Initially referring to natural scientific inquiry, Dewey writes that it must "start from and terminate in directly experienced subject-matter", and that, while "[t]heory may intervene in a long course of reasoning, many portions of which are remote from what is directly experienced ... the vine of pendant theory is

attached at both ends to the pillars of observed subject-matter” (*EN*, 2a). He extends this point to thinking in general and insists that for a process of thought to ‘tie back into’ or ‘terminate in’ experience is a matter of its making a difference to that experience, writing that the “objects attained in reflection”—i.e., concepts, theories, etc.—“define or lay out a path by which return to experienced things is of such a sort that the meaning, the significant content, of what is experienced gains an enriched and expanded force because of the path or method by which it was reached” (*Ibid.*, 5). For example, a theory of music could tie back into experience by letting us hear and understand music differently than we did in our pre-theoretical experience, allowing us to get more out of it by allowing us to apprehend a greater range of complexity or to register what a musician is doing by composing or playing a song in a certain way.

Of course, theories can mislead by priming us to experience phenomena non-veridically, e.g., by projecting onto them qualities they do not have, or by occluding qualities that they do. This is why—as James would insist—whether or not the way that a theory or idea affects our experience *enriches* or *expands* it has to be judged in light of the difference to further experiences that this way of ‘taking’ a phenomenon makes. That is, it is not just the fact that a theory can make a difference to experience that is what counts here, but whether this difference leads to greater overall coherence in experience—i.e., whether in the pragmatist sense it ‘works’ for us, on the whole and in the long run,¹³ to ‘take’ phenomena according to that theory.

Dewey goes on to argue that this relation between theory and practice should be a guiding methodological principle for philosophy, writing that

a first-rate test of the value of any philosophy which is offered us [is to ask]: Does it end in conclusions which, when they are referred back to ordinary life-experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant, more luminous to us, and make our dealings with them more fruitful? ... Does it yield the enrichment and increase of power of ordinary things ... Or does it become a mystery that these ordinary things should be what they are; and are philosophic concepts left to dwell in separation in some technical realm of their own? (*Ibid.*, 7)

¹³ Cf. James 1907, 583.

This principle suggests that, in addition to evaluating the logical strength of their arguments, positions in the philosophy of art can themselves be evaluated for how they could be applied concretely in practice to make a positive difference for efforts to create, appreciate, and understand artworks.¹⁴ When combined with the first condition of the expanded pragmatic constraint proposed above, it would also entail that positions in the philosophy of art can be assessed in terms of whether the questions they are meant to answer could arise from the experience of engaging with art as a creator or appreciator, with positions that answer questions that would not arise from practice either being pseudo-problems or belonging to another area of philosophy. With questions that can mean different things depending on the context in which they are asked, what a question could mean for a reflective practitioner who raises it in the context of their practice would have priority over what that question could mean if asked outside of a practical context. For example, the question ‘What is art?’ can mean something different when asked by a would-be artist about what they are in the midst of making, or by a spectator about something they are encountering, than it would if asked as a purely theoretical exercise.

This methodological principle will be most relevant to the chapters in Part II in which I lay out the basics of the account of art that I am synthesizing from the ideas of Collinwood, Dewey, Bergson, and de Beauvoir. The next three chapters will focus on these thinkers separately in a way that will set the stage for Part II, wherein all these chapters are brought together in a way that exemplifies the synthetic approach described above.

¹⁴ Note that this is an extension of the general ‘pragmatic maxims’ of Peirce and James, which hold that the meaning of a statement is the difference that would be made to someone’s experience if that statement were true rather than false, where a statement for which no difference would be made to anyone’s experience if it were true or false is considered meaningless (see Peirce 1878, 30-31; James 1907, 506-07). In this case, a position on an issue in the philosophy of art that had no implications for the experience of art or for the pursuit of some art-related practice would be pragmatically meaningless, and an issue for which all positions were meaningless in this way would be a pseudo-problem rather than a genuine issue.

2. ARTISTIC EXPRESSION AS QUALITATIVE INQUIRY: COLLINGWOOD AND DEWEY

2.1 Introduction

R.G. Collingwood is often taken to espouse an ‘ideal theory’ of art (IT), according to which artworks are mental objects ‘in the heads’ of the artists who create them, with the physical objects commonly taken to be works of art—painted canvases, sculptures, sounds made by instruments, etc.—being only the means by which audiences can reconstruct artists’ mental activities so as to apprehend the ‘real’ artworks in their own heads. The attribution of this theory to Collingwood dates back to early receptions of *The Principles of Art*, often via a conflation of Collingwood’s account with that of Benedetto Croce, who does endorse IT in his *Aesthetic: As Science of Expression and General Linguistic* (1902) and whose work Collingwood was known to admire.¹ This reading of Collingwood has become especially entrenched following Richard Wollheim’s (1968/1980; 1972) characterization and critique of IT with Collingwood as his target, and it is safe to say that it is still the lens through which Collingwood’s aesthetics is viewed, despite challenges from Aaron Ridley (1997; 1998; 1999; 2002), among others.²

¹ For reviews of *The Principles of Art* that take it to endorse IT or that associate it with Croce’s aesthetics, see Carritt 1938, Cournos 1938, Tomlin 1938-9, Vivas 1939, and the review in the *The Times Literary Supplement* (Anon. 1938). On Collingwood’s admiration of Croce, see Donagan 1972b, Boucher 1989, 16-20, and Inglis 2011, 97, 117-119.

² In addition to Wollheim, notable ‘idealist’ readings of Collingwood are found in Hospers 1954-5, Hospers 1956, Sheppard 1987, Graham 2001, and Kemp 2020. An early version of Ridley’s defence can be seen in Sclafani 1976. Other ‘non-ideal’ readings of Collingwood’s aesthetics include Charmichael 1971, Taylor 1973, Grant 1987, Davies 2008, and McGuiggan 2016. Other than Dilworth 1998, Kemp 2003, and Dönmez 2013, few recently published works argue directly for the idealist reading. My claim that this is still the dominant interpretation is based in part on views I have heard expressed by professional philosophers of art and graduate students at various international conferences over the last seven years, both during question periods and discussions after presentations and in the content of certain presentations themselves. Another sign the idealist reading remains dominant among analytic philosophers of art is that key parts of it are found in the lecture notes for the aesthetics course taught by Theodore Gracyk, who, as a recent co-editor of *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, can be taken to be part of ‘mainstream’ analytic aesthetics. The key phrase in these notes is “A musician can ‘make up a tune’ without writing it down or playing it or humming it. The

As the still-dominant interpretation of Collingwood's aesthetics, the idealist reading not only misconstrues his account but, I argue, obfuscates what is original and important—and, I think, plausibly right and explanatorily valuable—in it. My aim in this chapter is to further support the case against the idealist reading by (i) showing that Collingwood *does not* take artworks to be mental objects existing in people's heads rather than in the physical world, despite certain of his remarks that can seem to say this when read outside their full contexts, and (ii) by clarifying what Collingwood *does* take artworks to be in a way that explains the persistent confusion of his account with IT. It is important to do both things in order to save Collingwood's account from misconstrual, since only pointing to passages of *The Principles of Art* that do not fit with or that speak against IT will not answer part of Wollheim's critique, which is that these passages are simply inconsistent with those that Wollheim takes to most clearly articulate Collingwood's ontology of art. In other words, it is no use insisting that the idealist-seeming remarks be read in their full context so long as others think that this context is inconsistent or assume that the wider context for Collingwood's statements is his supposed idealism.³ One must also show how all the remarks in *The Principles of Art* can be read consistently as non-idealist.⁴

I argue that Collingwood takes artworks to be articulations of qualitative dimensions of experiences, with creating art being a process of inquiry into and exploration of these qualities. Moreover, this process is necessarily mediated: the artist's engagement with her medium is her

externalization of what's 'in the head' can be useful, but it is not necessary. *If this is true of a tune, it is also true of a painting*" (Gracyk 2011, my emphasis). As will be made apparent, the claim that externalization is unnecessary for artworks *in every medium* is crucial for IT as Wollheim formulates it but is *not* part of Collingwood's view.

³ The question of Collingwood's alleged idealism is beyond the scope of this chapter to address fully, but for his own insistence that he was not an idealist, see Collingwood 1935, 255-256 and Collingwood 1939, 56-57. Rather than any 'full-on' metaphysical idealism, Collingwood endorses a kind of *epistemic* anti-realism which treats the idea of mind-independent objects or a world beyond all knowledge or experience as incoherent. This is distinct from *ontological* anti-realism, i.e., the belief that the world or objects do not exist apart from our knowledge or experience of them, where both are distinct from metaphysical idealism or the belief that what exists are ideas or are mental *as opposed to* physical. For Collingwood, such claims are as incoherent as realism, since to say what is *not* the case here presupposes knowledge about what is beyond the scope of our knowledge. It is worth noting here the similarities between Collingwood's anti-realism and Hilary Putnam's 'internal realism' (see, e.g., Putnam 1981, Ch 3, esp. 49-54), which lends support for viewing Collingwood as a kind of (albeit unwitting) pragmatist; see also Requate 1995.

⁴ This is likely why Ridley's repudiation of the idealist reading of Collingwood has not been taken to be decisive, since he focuses on explicating and defending Collingwood's theory of artistic expression but does not say enough about what the metaphysical basis of Collingwood's account of expression in fact is, if it is not idealist. This can be seen in Ridley's unsatisfying (and arguably self-defeating) response to an objection from John Dilworth, on which I elaborate below.

way of inquiring, and her exploration, manipulation, and rearrangement of her medium is coextensive with her exploration of her qualitative experience. This second point is crucial for showing why Collingwood's theory is not IT, since it holds that artworks created in media such as sculpture or painting will *necessarily* be externalized in material form, albeit in a way that resists both IT and the "physical object hypothesis" that Wollheim also rejects as applied to art in general (see Wollheim 1968/1980, hereafter *AO*, 4-36; see esp. 34).

These elements of Collingwood's aesthetics, which have gone under- or unrecognized due to the idealist reading and his association with Croce, are most clearly brought out by noting similarities and points of compatibility between Collingwood's views and those of John Dewey. Reading these two thinkers alongside each other shows that both, working independently, developed conceptions of expression and its role in artistic creation that are largely, if not fully, equivalent. While this is of interest for what it might add to our understanding of Dewey's aesthetics, not to mention his general account of consciousness and experience, I will focus here on how this informs and clarifies Collingwood's aesthetics and how it shows the idealist reading to be mistaken, while accounting for why this mistake was so commonly made.⁵

The chapter is organized as follows. In section 2.2 I present Wollheim's characterization and critique of IT and his attribution of it to Collingwood; I also consider Ridley's objections to reading Collingwood as an ideal theorist, along with his reply to a counter-objection from John Dilworth, and argue that while Ridley's explication gets Collingwood's expression theory right, his response to Dilworth is inadequate and, moreover, that his argument does not stand up to a second criticism from Wollheim. In section 2.3 I argue that Collingwood's views of expression and artistic creation map onto Dewey's model of inquiry which shows that, for Collingwood, expressive activity and its results are not exclusively 'inner' or mental and that expression is necessarily mediated and involves a result that is, if not strictly embodied, then 'embodiable',

⁵ The short answer is that this is because the philosophical outlooks of both fall between realism and idealism. In Collingwood's case, because he was not a realist and since few or no alternatives were recognized in British philosophy at the time, he was assumed to be an idealist. See Collingwood 1939, 56 for his recognition of this situation. See also Collingwood 1935, 296-297, for statements from Gilbert Ryle that demonstrate the assumption of 'not realist, hence idealist'.

and that it is a kind of qualitative thinking. Section 2.4 explicates this notion of qualitative thinking as found in Dewey, distinguishing between three senses in which thought can be qualitative and arguing that artistic expression, on Collingwood's account, involves all three. In section 2.5 I explain how the compatibility between Collingwood's account of art and these ideas of Dewey's shows that the former is not IT, and that instead of being placed within the idealist tradition Collingwood can be understood to share Dewey's metaphysics of experience, which is neither realist nor idealist but what, following Lakoff and Johnson, I call 'interactionist'.⁶

2.2 The Received View of Collingwood's Aesthetics as an Ideal Theory of Art

As the early reviews show, *The Principles of Art* has long been taken to be a work of idealist aesthetics due to similarities it has with Croce's theory. E.F. Carritt, Collingwood's former tutor, writes that Collingwood "expounds *without deviation* Croce's theory that art is the expression of emotion", taking 'expression' to be equivalent to what Croce calls 'intuition' (Carritt 1938, 492, my emphasis). Similarly, E.W.F. Tomlin writes that Collingwood's view of art "is substantially the view of Croce" (Tomlin 1938-9, 118), and John Hospers associates Collingwood's account with Croce's in "The Concept of Artistic Expression" (1954-5) and "The Croce-Collingwood Theory of Art" (1956). While he notes that their accounts do "diverge on some points", he nevertheless claims that "they are so substantially alike on all important points" that "the two can for all practical purposes be considered as one theory" (Hospers 1956, 291).⁷

While the reviews do not take the allegedly Crocean elements of Collingwood's theory to be flaws, Hospers is more critical of Croce's theory, and hence of Collingwood's insofar as he takes

⁶ Writing of John Dewey's metaphysics of experience, Jim Garrison (1996, 398) calls this position 'transactional realism'. My use of 'interactionism' follows Lakoff and Johnson (1999, 25) in differing from the more familiar use of this term in philosophy of mind to refer to the causal interaction of mental substance/mind and material substance/body. That theory is dualistic in taking mind and matter to be distinct entities, existing independently prior to their interaction. In contrast, interactionism in my sense is non-dualistic, taking mind to emerge from the (not necessarily causal) interaction between an organism and its environment or world (with this world not necessarily being material). I set aside the question of how similar this is to 'enactivism' in cognitive science (see, e.g., Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 1991; Noë 2004), partly for reasons of space and partly to avoid reading a modern theory back into earlier thinkers. For a recent enactivist account of art that may be fruitful to compare with the account I synthesize in chapters 5 and 6, see Carvalho 2019.

⁷ Cf. *AO*, 36: "It is usual nowadays to think of [IT] as the Croce-Collingwood theory, and to consider it in the extended form that has been given to it by these two philosophers, who, moreover, differ only in point of detail or emphasis."

them to be equivalent. The points their theories share, on Hospers' reading, are: (i) that art is distinct from craft, such that "the artist *qua* artist is not a craftsman at all" (*Ibid.*, my emphasis); (ii) that artists are not distinguished by their technical skill but by their "ability to have artistic ideas [or] intuitions" (*Ibid.*, 292); and (iii) that these intuitions are formed and exist in the mind, where the finished intuition is itself the work of art. This makes expression an inner mental process distinct from any physical externalization it might receive. Hospers notes that on this theory "[t]he work of art ... is not (as popularly supposed) the physical artifact—e.g., the painting on the canvas—but something that exists *in the mind* of the artist, and can exist again *in the minds* of those who (by means of the artifact) come to share his intuitions," and that "[t]he physical artifact ... is only a means towards the attainment of this end: the reproduction of the work of art (the artist's intuition) in the mind of the observer" (*Ibid.*, 293, my emphasis).

These are the central tenets of IT to which Wollheim objects. While Hospers also raises some objections, his concerns are different from Wollheim's: because Hospers' objections do not target IT so much as the grounding of art in expression, they apply to the account I develop in Chapter Five insofar as it is a form of expressionism; accordingly, I address Hospers' objections in that chapter (see §5.2.4). Since Wollheim's objections have been especially influential,⁸ I will focus on Wollheim as my representative of those who take Collingwood to hold IT.

2.2.1 Wollheim on the Ideal Theory

Like Hospers, Wollheim takes Croce's and Collingwood's aesthetics to "differ only in points of detail or emphasis" (*AO*, 36) and to endorse three propositions that comprise IT: (i) "the work of art consists in an inner state or condition of the artist, called an intuition or an expression"; (ii) "this state is not immediate or given, but is the product of a process, which is peculiar to the artist, and which involves articulation, organization, and unification"; (iii) "the intuition so developed *may* be externalized in a public form, in which case we have the artifact which is often

⁸ As Ridley notes, Wollheim's interpretation has a "more or less unquestioned authority", as seen from "introductory books" on aesthetics of which Ridley lists several from the 1970s through the mid-'90 that present it "not as a possible interpretation of Collingwood, but as a straightforward report of what Collingwood says" (Ridley 1997, 272, fn.5).

but wrongly taken to be the work of art, but equally it need not be” (*Ibid.*, 36-37). As an example of IT, Wollheim points to Croce’s 1929 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* entry on aesthetics wherein Croce discusses a passage from Virgil and claims that “the poetry” in the passage does not lie in its “surface elements”—e.g., the words used, or the details and things they describe—, which could also be elements of non-poetic works, but in the “human experience [in] the mind which organizes them” (*Ibid.*, 37).

After outlining IT, Wollheim raises two objections. One is that IT “ignores the significance of the medium” (*Ibid.*, 40) for the creation of artworks by allowing that works can be complete in the artist’s imagination prior to any externalization in a medium. This does not align with artistic practice, since the medium in which an artist works is more than contingently related to the artworks that he or she creates: many of a painting’s visual qualities, for instance, will be determined by the painter’s choice of oils or watercolours; performances of Baroque chamber music will have different sonic qualities if played on modern or period instruments; etc. Another objection is that by separating the ‘real’ work of art from any external and perceptible object an audience could encounter such as a painted canvas, a bust in bronze, a set of sounds played on instruments, etc., and by locating the work in the artist’s mind, IT makes artworks in principle inaccessible to audiences. Even if IT takes the externalization of a work in some physical media to be a means by which an audience can reconstruct for themselves the work that existed in the artist’s head, the audience never has access to the work itself, only its stand-in. This introduces an epistemological gap, with audience members never able to be sure that they have grasped the work through its externalized form, i.e., that the imaginative experience they have when, e.g., looking at a painting matches the imaginative experience of the artist. Thus, with IT “the link between artist and audience [is] severed” (*Ibid.*); however, without this link many artistic practices, including the ways in which people value art, would be incomprehensible.

Croce’s theory does seem to be IT, as can be seen from his *Encyclopaedia Britannica* contribution (1929) and, more explicitly, in *Aesthetic*, wherein he writes that “[t]he aesthetic fact”, which here refers to the work of art, “is altogether completed in the expressive elaboration

of impressions” and that “[w]hen we have achieved the word within us, conceived definitely and vividly a figure or a statue, or found a musical motive, expression is born and is complete; there is no need for anything else”; thus, for Croce, “the work of art (the aesthetic work) is always *internal*” (Croce 1902, 50-51, original emphasis).⁹ The question here, however, is whether this is also true of Collingwood’s account of art.

Apart from the initial assertion that Collingwood’s and Croce’s theories are practically the same, the only part of Collingwood’s account that is discussed in *Art and its Objects* is his distinction between ‘art’ and ‘craft’. Wollheim notes that Collingwood takes the kind of making that pertains to art, which he calls ‘creation’, to be distinct from the kind that pertains to craft, which he calls ‘fabrication’ and which Wollheim equates with the making of artifacts (*AO*, 38). Collingwood’s argument for this distinction rests on six features that are characteristic of craft—or rather, of craft-making—none of which is strictly necessary for an activity to count as a craft but the absence of most or all of which he takes to discount an activity from being craft.¹⁰ Wollheim mentions three of these six features—viz., the distinctions between means and end, planning and execution, and raw material and finished product¹¹—and implies that they are part of “the negative aspect” of IT insofar as they entail that artists, as opposed to craftspeople, do not make artifacts and hence that artworks are not (physical, material) artifacts (*Ibid.*, 37-38).

Wollheim’s appeal to the art/craft distinction in order to show that Collingwood holds IT is weak. The distinction Collingwood draws between what he calls ‘art’ and ‘craft’ is not between two kinds of object but between two kinds of activity or ways of making things (see *PA*, 17, quoted in fn.12). While an object that is produced by activities that involve only one of these ways of making could be considered an object of one type and not the other—e.g., a wholly

⁹ See also Croce 1902, 116-17, where he writes that the artwork, as an “intuition” or “internal expression”, is fully distinct from of any externalization or communication of it to an audience “which may or may not follow the aesthetic fact”.

¹⁰ See *PA*, 17, where Collingwood writes: “Without claiming that these features together exhaust the notion of craft, or that each of them separately is peculiar to it, we may claim with tolerable confidence that where most of them are absent from a certain activity that activity is not a craft, and, if it is called by that name, is so called either by mistake or in a vague and inaccurate way.” Here Collingwood can be read as offering what has come to be called a ‘cluster account’ of craft; see Gaut 2000 and 2005 on the nature of cluster accounts in the context of a discussion of the concept of art.

¹¹ The other three features are that means and end are related in opposite ways in the activities of planning and execution, that there is a distinction between form and matter, and that there is often a hierarchy between crafts. See *PA*, 16.

fabricated item, such as blacksmith's nail made for a purely utilitarian purpose, is only a craft object and not an artwork—, nothing that Collingwood says entails that a given object must be the product of only one way of making. In fact, Collingwood explicitly allows for art and craft to overlap such that something can be a work of both, writing that “[a] building or a cup, which is primarily an artifact or product of craft, *may also be a work of art; but what makes it a work of art is different from what makes it an artifact* (*PA*, 43, my emphasis; see also the example of a jar on *PA*, 21).^{12 13} Thus, we should understand ‘art’ and ‘craft’ as referring not to types of objects but to *aspects* of objects, or as Ridley puts it, as a distinction “between respects in which an object can ... be understood instrumentally, and respects in which it cannot” (Ridley 1999, 16).

Even if Collingwood's art/craft distinction were a distinction between types of object, there is nothing within the distinction itself to suggest that it refers to a type of physical object on one hand and a type of mental object on the other. Although Collingwood gives examples of simple poems or tunes composed ‘in the head’ (e.g., *PA*, 20-21) to show that at least some art-making can involve none of the features he takes to be characteristic of craft—from which he concludes that whatever makes something art is not what makes it craft—, it does not follow that *no* work of art can be a physical object; this would only follow if something *not* being craft entailed that it was immaterial.¹⁴ Thus, not only does Wollheim overlook the potential overlap of art and craft in Collingwood's account, but he misconstrues Collingwood as giving necessary conditions for craft with the features he lists (see *AO*, 38: “every craft involves...”) and holding that none applies to art (*Ibid.*). Wollheim must assume that ‘artifact’ means ‘physical or material object’ to read the distinction between artifacts—i.e., products of fabrication—and artworks as entailing that the latter are not physical, but this is not supported by anything that Collingwood writes.

¹² See also Collingwood 1933, especially pp. 28-31, for his theory of the overlap of concepts, according to which a distinction between concepts does not necessarily entail a difference in referents.

¹³ We should *not* read Collingwood as saying here that *all* buildings and cups are primarily works of craft, but rather to be positing an example of a particular building or cup which is primarily so.

¹⁴ Wollheim and others may be misled on this point by taking Collingwood's denial that artistic creation must involve a *raw material* that is transformed into the finished product in the way that a bar of iron is transformed into a horseshoe to be a denial that artworks are *material objects*. It is important to note that Collingwood does not say that *no* instances of artistic creation can involve something that could be called ‘raw materials’ that are (re-)arranged in the course of making the work, only that this is not characteristic of artistic creation in the way that it is of fabrication.

Wollheim could reply that even if Collingwood does not explicitly assert that artistic creations, as opposed to products of craft, are non-physical or mental in his discussion of the art/craft distinction, he does say this elsewhere in *The Principles of Art* so this is part of the context in which that discussion should be read. In fact, Wollheim does note these passages—not in *Art and its Objects*, but in his 1972 essay “On an Alleged Inconsistency in Collingwood’s Aesthetic”. In some passages Collingwood writes of artworks as imaginary entities but his claims stop short of IT, for instance: “A work of art *need not be* what we should call a real thing. It *may be* what we call an imaginary thing ... [which] *may be* completely created when it has been created as a thing whose only place is in the artist’s mind” (*PA*, 130, my emphasis). These and similar remarks are compatible with some number of works of art being ‘real things’, i.e., externalized or embodied in concrete form outside of anyone’s imagination, so long as externalization is not taken to be necessary for all works of art.¹⁵ However, in other passages he does seem to endorse IT by appearing to declare that all artworks are essentially imaginary entities ‘in the head’ and that any externalizations of them are not to be identified with the works themselves. Consider:

a tune is already complete and perfect when it exists merely as a tune in [a composer’s] head, that is, an imaginary tune. Next, he may arrange for the tune to be played before an audience. Now there comes into existence a real tune, a collection of noises. *But which of these two things is the work of art?* ... [T]he work of art, is not the collection of noises, *it is the tune in the composer’s head*. The noises made by the performers, and heard by the audience, *are not the music at all*; they are only means by which the audience ... can reconstruct for themselves *the imaginary tune* that existed in the composer’s head. (*PA*, 139, my emphasis)

And:

a piece of music is not something audible, but something which may exist solely in the musician’s head,” and “[t]o some extent *it must exist solely in the musician’s head* (including ... the audience as well as the composer under that name),” so “[t]he

¹⁵ It is worth noting that Wollheim allows that works in certain artforms, such as literature and music, can “exist in the artist’s head” and “be complete before [they are] externalized”, and only insists that works in certain other mediums, such as painting and sculpture, must be externalized. (*AO*, 40-41). Note also that the only examples Collingwood gives of artworks existing solely ‘in the head’ of an artist without being externalized are of poems and simple tunes.

music which [one] actually enjoys as a work of art *is thus never sensuously or 'actually' heard at all. It is something imagined.* (*Ibid.*, 151, my emphasis)

And:

the painted picture is not the work of art in the proper sense of that phrase. [...] What has been asserted is not that the painting is a work of art, which would be as much as to say that the artist's aesthetic activity is identical with painting it; but that its production is somehow necessarily connected with the aesthetic activity, that is, with the creation of the imaginative experience that is the work of art. (*Ibid.*, 305)¹⁶

These passages offer the most support for attributing IT to Collingwood and hence for taking Wollheim's objections to apply to Collingwood's views, so any defence against the idealist reading of his aesthetics must address them. It is here that we can turn to Ridley's defence.

2.2.2 Ridley's Objection to the Received View

Ridley argues for two reasons why we should not read Collingwood as an ideal theorist. First, along with the passages quoted above, there are a number of other remarks in *The Principles of Art* that would not make sense as the statements of someone who held IT. These include several passages that discuss an artist's concrete engagement with, and manipulation and exploration of, a physical medium, where Collingwood highlights the necessary rather than contingent relation between this work in a medium and the creation of these artworks. Second, with regard to the passages that have been taken to assert IT, Ridley argues that this reading of them is uncharitable as it assumes that Collingwood overlooked a serious mistake in his reasoning, where Ridley contends that there is another way to read these passages that does not attribute such a mistake to Collingwood and which is thus more charitable.

Among the passages Ridley discusses in which Collingwood describes artistic creation in a manner that is inconsistent with IT is the following:

A man paints with his hands, not with his eyes. ... [Painters do] their work with fingers and wrist and arms, and even (as they [walk] about the studio) with their legs

¹⁶ The third passage is not quoted by Wollheim but it is by Dilworth in his critique of Ridley, where this passage is meant to pose an even greater problem than the first two passages for the non-IT interpretation.

and toes. What one paints is what can be painted ... and *what can be painted must stand in some relation to the muscular activity of painting it*. [As advice for draughtsmen:] Hold your pencil vertical to the paper ... don't stroke the paper, dig into it; think of it as if it were the surface of a slab of clay in which you were going to cut a relief, and of your pencil as a knife. (*Ibid.*, 144-45, my emphasis)¹⁷

These statements are not the kind of thing that someone who holds IT would assert. If one held that works of art are “inner state[s] or condition[s]” of the artist that can come into being entirely within the artist’s mind with no external component, it is not clear what one could mean by saying that muscular activity is necessarily involved in painting—where in this context ‘painting’ refers to processes of *artistic* creation and not to what could be considered merely craft, e.g., the application of paint to a surface. Similarly, the comments on draughtsmanship come in the context of a discussion of artistic creation and reception as activities of the imagination, which suggests that whatever Collingwood means by an ‘imaginary’ activity or creation, it is not something that takes place or is created exclusively in the mind with only a contingent connection to a material medium, as per IT. In other words, if works of art are mental rather than physical objects such that *a* painting or *a* drawing, *qua* artwork, is not to be identified with material paint on canvas or graphite on paper, respectively, then how an artist holds her pencil or moves her hands and arms would be irrelevant for creating the work. But these passages show that Collingwood does think these things relevant to expression and artistic creation. Thus, Ridley argues, Collingwood cannot think that artworks are ‘ideal’ objects, so the passages where he *seems* to endorse IT call for another interpretation (see Ridley 1997, 266-67).

Ridley goes on to offer an alternate interpretation after arguing that the idealist reading of these passages is not only inconsistent with other passages, such as the one above, but is uncharitable. This alleged lack of charity involves taking the distinction Collingwood draws between hearing sounds and apprehending a tune to be a ‘doubling up’ of the listener’s experiences. According to the idealist reading, what Collingwood is saying in passages such as

¹⁷ Compare this with Croce’s endorsement of Michelangelo’s remark “One paints, not with the hands, but with the brain” (Croce 1902, 10), where Croce reads ‘brain’ as ‘mind’.

those quoted at the end of section 2.2.1 is that someone at a concert is having two separate experiences—i.e., a sensory experience of hearing the sounds made by the players and an imaginative experience of apprehending the tune—with each experience having a different object—i.e., the sounds, which are physical and audible, and the tune, which is imaginary. Positing the existence of two distinct objects, one physical and one mental, is a necessary part of IT, which identifies the musical artwork with the latter *rather than* the former, as Collingwood seems to do in the aforementioned passages.

Why is it uncharitable to read Collingwood this way, according to Ridley? For one thing, it is metaphysically extravagant and unsupported by the phenomenology of attending to music, since we do not first experience hearing mere noises with our ears and then experience a tune or rhythm that we construct in our imagination out of these noises. For another, this doubling up is unnecessary for the point that Collingwood wants to make with his remarks in the problematic passages, which, Ridley argues, is to note the difference between passively hearing sounds and actively listening to sounds *as music* so as to “acknowledge[e] the active, imaginative contribution of the audience to the experiences that artworks can yield” (*Ibid.*, 267), where this is part of Collingwood’s broader point that creating or appreciating art requires an active mental engagement on the part of both artists and audience members (see *Ibid.*, 267-68).¹⁸ Collingwood did not need to double the experiences or their objects in order to make these points, as opposed to distinguishing between hearing sounds *as* mere noises and hearing them *as* music. Thus, Ridley argues, if one wants to read Collingwood as an ideal theorist one should “explain why he did not see that an imaginative experience (of music, say) need not be an experience of something imaginary (in someone’s head), but might rather be a *way* of experiencing something real” (*Ibid.*, 265, original emphasis).

According to the non-idealist reading that Ridley advocates, the distinction Collingwood draws in the passages Wollheim cites as evidence of IT should be construed as a distinction between two different ways of experiencing something, where only one of these ways counts as

¹⁸ Cf. Collingwood’s parallel example of attending to a lecture (*PA*, 140-41), which Ridley discusses on p. 265.

experiencing it *as art*, properly speaking, and where these two ways of experiencing can coexist as components of what can be treated as a single experience when viewed holistically. The latter is what Collingwood refers to when he writes of the “non-specialized imaginative experience” that he calls “an imaginative experience of total activity”, which he takes to include “elements homogeneous, after their imaginary fashion, with those which make up the specialized sensuous experience [e.g., hearing sounds]” (*PA*, 147-48). If we do not take Collingwood to double up experiences and their objects, we should read the qualifier “after their imaginary fashion” *not* as referring to imagined as opposed to felt sensations, but to sensations that are registered both passively through our sensory organs and actively in imagination.

On this reading, when Collingwood writes that music is “never sensuously or ‘actually’ heard” but is “imagined” (*Ibid.*, 151), we should take him to be saying that *merely* hearing (i.e., physiologically registering) sounds made by performers is not sufficient for experiencing music without the audience also registering these sounds consciously by hearing them as related in a certain way (e.g., as forming a tune, etc.). Likewise, when he writes that the noises made by a musician are not the musical work or that painting a canvas is not the aesthetic activity of creating art (*Ibid.*, 139, 305), we should read him as saying that *merely* producing certain noises, or *merely* applying paint to a surface, is not sufficient to produce art without the producer also having an imaginative experience of the noises or blobs of paint as art (e.g., as forming a pattern, etc.). So, when Collingwood speaks of artworks existing ‘in the heads’ of artists and audiences, the charitable reading, according to Ridley, is to take him to be saying that artworks exist only as objects of people’s experiences.¹⁹

2.2.3 Dilworth’s Criticisms and Ridley’s Response

Dilworth objects to this construal of Collingwood’s remarks and accuses Ridley of being uncharitable by not accepting Collingwood’s statements as written and trying to revise their

¹⁹ This is akin to Roger Scruton’s view that music exists in what he calls an ‘intentional realm’ that is distinct from the physical realm that contains sound waves and ears. See Gracyk 2008, 139 for a brief explication of Scruton’s view, the original of which can be found in Scruton 1997. Scruton’s view is not, to my knowledge, generally thought to entail IT.

meaning to make them more palatable. Dilworth argues that this assumes either that Collingwood did not actually mean what he wrote or that he was not able to write well enough to communicate clearly what he actually meant, and that charity calls for us to take an author's statements at face value even if it makes them inconsistent (Dilworth 1998, 394). Aside from questions of charity, Dilworth objects to Ridley's reinterpretation of the passages that seem to assert IT, largely because of Ridley's insistence that Collingwood does not double up on the experiences involved in apprehending artworks. He argues that this overlooks "Collingwood's ... quasi-Humean views about the mind", according to which our experiences include both "impressions" and "ideas", the former at the purely sensuous level of experience that Collingwood calls the 'psychical' and the latter at the conscious level (*Ibid.*, 395; see *PA*, 305-8).

These criticisms from Dilworth are easily countered.²⁰ For one thing, his insistence on taking what Collingwood writes 'at face value' assumes a single, literal meaning for talk of something being "in the head". However, the fact that Collingwood puts terms and phrases such as "internal", "mental", "existing in the head" in quotes when using them to characterize what he calls "the work of art proper" (see, e.g., *PA*, 37) makes it questionable that he intended these expressions to be taken fully literally, just as his putting "actually" in quotes when he writes that music "is never sensuously or 'actually' heard" (*Ibid.*, 151) suggests that it *is* heard in *some* sense, though not in another (cf. Ridley 1997, 268). Moreover, it is not clear that these terms and phrases have a single straightforward or literal meaning; rather, what a particular speaker means by calling something 'mental', or 'internal', or saying it is 'in someone's head', and what this is in opposition to—e.g., whether 'mental' entails 'not physical', whether 'in the head' entails 'merely imaginary', etc.—will depend on the metaphysical account of mind the speaker endorses, whether explicitly or implicitly.²¹ Likewise, what one means by saying something is 'imagined' depends on one's account of imagination. Since just what Collingwood means by

²⁰ Dilworth raises a third criticism, which is that Ridley (he claims) does not offer an argument for why Collingwood's remarks concerning artists' engagement with their media are inconsistent with IT (Dilworth 1998, 393). This is an odd criticism, since Ridley does explain this inconsistency in the second section of his paper (see Ridley 1997, 266).

²¹ Ridley argues that we should avoid reading Collingwood, who wrote in the 1930s, through a post-Rylean and post-Wittgensteinian lens and attributing to him what someone today would mean with the same phrases (Ridley 1997, 268).

saying that artworks exist in the head, and whether or not this is what Wollheim means by an ‘inner state or condition’, is what is in question, it begs the question for Dilworth to assume the meaning of Collingwood’s words is obvious for any reader who understands English and that Ridley’s reading goes against this manifest meaning.

Dilworth might reply that Collingwood’s ‘quasi-Humean’ account of mind is the context in which these statements should be read, and that when they are the idealist reading is plausible and Ridley’s reinterpretation is wrong; indeed, this seems to be Dilworth’s point when he criticizes Ridley’s argument to the effect that Collingwood need not be read as doubling up on experiences. However, Dilworth misconstrues Collingwood’s use of the terms ‘impression’ and ‘idea’ when he takes them to be signs that Collingwood’s own account of mind is relevantly similar to Hume’s, at least with respect to the issue of doubling up experiences. What Ridley is saying that Collingwood does *not* do, but which IT does, is distinguish between two separate kinds of object—i.e., ‘real’ ones existing in the physical world and ‘imaginary’ ones existing in the mind—and two separate modes of experiencing these objects—i.e., sensuously and imaginatively, and the section of *The Principles of Art* Dilworth cites as supposedly showing Collingwood’s doubling of experience (Chapter 14, §3) actually supports Ridley’s reading.

Regarding what he calls psychical and conscious levels of experience at which, respectively, sensations and ideas occur, Collingwood writes that conscious experience (i.e., imaginative activity; see *PA*, 215) “presupposes” psychical experience (i.e., sensation and affect), “*not* in the sense that the [psychical] is left behind when the [conscious] is reached, *but* in the sense that the [psychical] is related to the [conscious] somewhat as a raw material is related to something made out of it by imposing upon it a new form”, and that conscious or imaginative experience, including the apprehension of ideas, “thus contains [the psychical experience of ‘impressions’, i.e., sensations and affects] within itself as its own matter”, with conscious or imaginative experience “being, as it were, a form according to which this matter is now organized” (*PA*, 305-6). While this passage is dense and takes parsing, it shows that when Collingwood talks of an impression or psychical experience (i.e., what he calls a ‘feeling’) being converted by

imagination into what he calls an ‘idea’, he does not take the idea to be a second thing over and above the impression, any more than the shaping of a lump of clay into the figure of a person results in ‘the clay’ on one hand, and ‘the figure’ or ‘the person’ on the other, as two entities.

What Collingwood goes on to say clarifies further that he does not take things that are imagined to be distinct from and additional to things that are sensed, since he writes that “every imaginative experience is a sensuous experience together with consciousness of the same” where “[t]he sensuous experience need not exist by itself first [but] may come into being under the very eyes, so to speak, of consciousness, so that it no sooner comes into being than it is transmuted into imagination” (*Ibid.*, 306-7). In other words, according to Collingwood we do not first have a sensory experience of something physical, in response to which a mental process occurs (i.e., expression), the result of which is a second thing called an idea that we experience imaginatively, anymore than a caterpillar and the butterfly it becomes are two separate entities. But this is Ridley’s point when he says Collingwood does not double up on experiences. Furthermore, this passage makes clear that when Collingwood distinguishes between “what transmutes (consciousness), what is transmuted (sensation), and what it is transmuted into (imagination)” he is making a logical distinction, just as we might distinguish between the clay and its shape, and not a distinction between multiple entities (*Ibid.*, 307).

Unfortunately, Ridley does not respond to Dilworth with these or similar points; instead, he gives up on far too much, to the point of sabotaging his argument that Collingwood’s account of art is not idealist. His reply focuses on arguing that the medium is necessarily involved in the creation of artworks on Collingwood’s account, in contrast to its inessentiality according to IT. However, in doing so he concedes to Dilworth that Collingwood takes artworks to be “mental items in people’s heads” (Ridley 1998, 397). Whereas in his initial paper he argued for a reading of Collingwood’s talk of artworks being ‘in the heads’ of artists and audiences that does not take such talk to posit mental entities—i.e., that reads it as not being metaphysically idealist—, here he writes that Collingwood was a metaphysical idealist who held that “the world is constituted by the thoughts we have about it” (*Ibid.*), so Collingwood was committed to thinking that

artworks were mental entities only because of an overarching ‘Global Idealism’ according to which *everything* exists ‘in the head’. Ridley argues that recognizing this wider metaphysical framework eliminates any inconsistency between saying that artworks are both “strictly mental items” and taking them to “exist in the publicly accessible media of their embodiment” (*Ibid.*). On this reading, by pointing out that artworks exist ‘in the head’ Collingwood is not drawing a distinction between what is mental and what is non-mental, but is insisting that something is a work of art only when it has been “engaged with ... imaginatively and ... understood” (*Ibid.*).

This move by Ridley weakens his earlier defence of Collingwood’s aesthetics as more plausible and explanatorily valuable than it has been traditionally viewed, since this makes Collingwood’s account consistent at the expense of its overall plausibility, even if it technically avoids IT by rejecting any distinction between things being ‘in the head’ and ‘in the world’. It is not clear that we can translate what Collingwood says about works of art, their public embodiment, and artists’ engagement with their media into non-idealist terms if these claims are originally made against the background of a view of all these things as constituted by mind. This is because whatever is taken to follow from these claims when made within an overall idealist framework will not necessarily follow for their translation into a different framework. In other words, it is not clear that “cancel[ling] through by Mind” (*Ibid.*, 397) will make Collingwood’s account acceptable to those already skeptical of it, even if it lets it escape IT. Moreover, it makes Collingwood’s expression of his views even more obscure if we read his distinction between sounds ‘actually’ heard’ and a tune ‘in the head’ as simply a distinction between something that is understood and something that is not: if this is what he meant, why would he not have been more straightforward and framed his point in terms of understanding?

I think that Ridley’s original reading of Collingwood is more or less correct and that his backtracking in response to Dilworth’s criticisms, which I have argued above are weak, was an unfortunate misstep and that a better response is available. Specifically, I think the way to argue against the attribution of IT and its problems to Collingwood is to show that he does not take artworks to be ‘mental items’ or ‘inner states or conditions’.

2.2.4 *Why the Received View is Wrong*

One might attempt to show that Collingwood does not endorse IT by pursuing Ridley's initial method further and noting other passages in *The Principles of Art* that appear to conflict with IT or that would not make sense for someone who held IT to assert. There are several passages like this—some of which are discussed below—but this approach would not succeed for the same reason that Ridley's is insufficient to dismiss the attribution of IT to Collingwood, even once the challenges raised by Dilworth have been met. This is because such an approach would still remain susceptible to a second line of criticism that Wollheim develops in his 1972 essay "On an Alleged Inconsistency in Collingwood's Aesthetic"; as the title indicates, this line of criticism is that *The Principles of Art* is inconsistent due to its containing both passages asserting IT and passages that are incompatible with IT.²² Wollheim acknowledges the passages that could be appealed to and acknowledges their incompatibility with IT, but takes this to show that Collingwood was inconsistent in what he wrote, not that he did not really assert IT in the passages that seem to do so, where the latter conclusion must assume that both sets of passages express one coherent view in order to motivate reinterpreting some remarks in light of others. Likewise, one opposed to the Ridleyan defence could always maintain that Collingwood held IT and did not realize that some of the things he said about art were inconsistent with this position.

The better way to disassociate Collingwood from IT is to show that he is not an idealist—or at least not the sort that is relevant for IT²³—and that his metaphysical outlook and account of mind are incompatible with IT. In *An Autobiography* (1939; hereafter *A*), Collingwood rejects his contemporaries' classification of him as an idealist and insists that, instead of turning away from the realism he held as a student towards the idealism of British Hegelians such as Bradley

²² The inconsistency that Wollheim is concerned with here is between IT's entailments that works of art do not require an audience outside their authors' heads and Collingwood's remarks that take artworks to be publicly available and that take the relation between artwork and audience to be essential (see Wollheim 1972, 68-69, 77-78).

²³ Even Collingwood scholars who count him as an idealist generally take him to be a "conceptual idealist" who thinks that anything we can know or speak sensibly of must be at least partly mind-dependent (see, e.g., Connelly and D'Oro, 2020), and not a metaphysical idealist for whom everything that exists is constituted by mind or is a mental object. However, it is metaphysical and not conceptual or epistemic idealism that is relevant for IT.

and Green, he had “arrived at conclusions of [my] own quite unlike anything the school of Green taught” (A, 56), where here ‘the school of Green’ stands for idealism. Likewise, Collingwood explicitly denies that he is an idealist in his correspondence with Gilbert Ryle. Responding to Ryle’s claim that he is “presumably to be classified, for what such labels are worth, as an Idealist,” Collingwood writes that he “resent[s] both the label and the irresponsible manner of attaching it,” and states that Ryle has “falsified the issue, and oriented [his] criticism not towards my actual views but towards the views [that Ryle] ... ascribe[s] to a school or an alleged school of thought to which I do not belong” (Collingwood 1935, 255-57). Apart from these statements *about* his philosophy, some of the clearest evidence *in* his philosophy that he is not an idealist is found in the unpublished manuscript titled *Libellus de Generatione* (1920) in which he explicitly rejects both realism and idealism as ontologies of ‘being’ and lays out the basic elements of a process-oriented radical empiricism that sees reality as a ‘world of becoming’.²⁴

One need not be an idealist to accept IT, since it is also compatible with metaphysical dualism; one need only hold that artworks are mental entities, not that everything is. However, Collingwood is not a dualist either, as can be seen from *The New Leviathan*, in which he rejects Cartesian dualism, psycho-physical parallelism, and psycho-physical interactionism for all assuming “that man is partly body and partly mind” (NL, 2.42; 2.1ff). He takes this assumption to underlie the traditional ‘mind-body problem’, which he considers to be “a bogus problem” (*Ibid.*, 2.41); instead, his view is that “man’s body and man’s mind are not two different things [but] one and the same thing ... as known in two different ways” (*Ibid.*, 2.42). This understanding of the distinction between physical and mental as a matter of two ways of knowing or conceiving of something rather than different types of substance fits with Ridley’s initial interpretation of Collingwood as not doubling up on experiences. This is reinforced by his distinction in *The Idea*

²⁴ The manuscript for *Libellus de Generatione* was thought to have been lost, being mentioned but reported as destroyed in Collingwood’s *Autobiography*; however, a surviving handwritten copy was found and is now held in the Bodleian Library’s Collingwood Archives (Deposit 28). Since a processual orientation or a focus on ‘becoming’ over ‘being’ is not necessarily opposed to idealism, I should note that Collingwood’s criticisms of idealism here are directed towards the Hegelian conception of an absolute spirit that ultimately subsumes all change within itself, and that his approach is closer to Bergson’s in taking becoming to be fundamental and refusing to ground it in being at any stage.

of History (1936; hereafter *IH*) between mere events and actions, where all events have ‘outsides’, i.e., can be described in terms of spatial, temporal, and causal relations with other events, while actions also have ‘insides’, i.e., can be described in terms of thoughts, reasons, purposes, etc. and explained in terms of logical rather than causal connections (*IH*, 213-15). What might at first look like dualistic language referring to distinct parts of events is, in fact, a distinction between different cognitive perspectives that can be taken on the same events. If Collingwood’s talk of historians being interested in the ‘insides’ or thought-aspects of actions rather than their ‘outsides’ is not dualistic, it gives us a precedent for taking his talk of the musical work being ‘in the head’ of its composer rather than ‘in’ the sounds that reach listeners’ ears to be similarly non-dualistic.

Since IT depends on maintaining a distinction between physical things and mental or imaginary things as different ontological kinds, and since both Collingwood’s metaphysics and his account of mind and its relation to the body do not allow for such a distinction, Collingwood cannot hold IT as Wollheim characterizes it. Although this tells us what Collingwood’s account is not and shows that Wollheim’s criticisms of IT do not apply to it, this conclusion does not yet specify what Collingwood *does* take art to be. While I find Ridley’s reading of Collingwood to be more or less correct, just what it means to say that artworks exist only within the intentional realm, or that they involve ‘total imaginative experiences’, remains to be explained. The next step, I suggest, is to clarify what exactly Collingwood takes expression to involve so as to reveal the role of the medium and the place of artistic technique in his account. I propose to do this by attending to parallels between Collingwood’s account and certain ideas from Dewey, which the rest of this chapter will explore.

2.3 Artistic Expression as Deweyan Inquiry

The parts of Dewey’s philosophy that best clarify Collingwood’s account of expression are not from his aesthetics, as might be expected, but are his theory of inquiry, which forms the basis of his logic (Dewey 1938, hereafter *LTI*), and his account of qualitative thought (Dewey 1930;

hereafter *QT*). Although I find the conception of expression in Dewey's aesthetics to be strikingly close to Collingwood's and am surprised that their theories of art have not been linked more often, given their many similarities,²⁵ noting these similarities would not be the most effective way to clarify what Collingwood takes expression to be. The details of Collingwood's account would need to be established and understood before we can judge whether any purported similarities with Dewey's account are genuine parallels; otherwise, we would have no reason to accept that descriptions of Dewey's aesthetics also describe Collingwood's and point to a substantial connection between them, rather than being merely superficially similar. Accordingly, in this section I will focus on showing how Collingwood's account of art maps onto the two aforementioned ideas of Dewey's, only then bringing in points from the latter's *Art as Experience* to reinforce their compatibility.

2.3.1 Dewey's Theory of Inquiry

Dewey conceives of inquiry as "the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole" (*LTI*, 108). In other words, it is a process of adjustment by which one 'reorders' the elements of an uncertain or problematic situation so as to bring about their coherence, where the problem or uncertainty comes from these elements not fully cohering or 'hanging together'. It is important to note that, for Dewey, a *situation* consists of a subject—or, in his terms, an 'organism'—and its environment taken together, and so is not something external to the subject that she is 'in'. Hence, the elements of a situation will include the subject's mental habits, dispositions, expectations, etc., as well as her bodily capacities and comportment, how she is 'geared into' her surroundings, and the things and other organisms that are present in her environment. It is also important to note that the uncertainty from which inquiry begins is, for Dewey, a feature of the situation rather than a

²⁵ For an article noting this connection, see Sawyer 2000. The prevalence of Wollheimian readings of Collingwood is likely why the similarities between their aesthetics have not been more widely recognized.

mental state ‘internal’ to the subject (*Ibid.*, 109-10). Dewey sees inquiry as fundamental to all forms of intelligent, non-habitual activity and finds a common pattern underlying its exercise across various domains of life, with factors being emphasized differently in different domains given the different problems and subject-matters with which they are concerned (*Ibid.*, 105).

Dewey takes the common pattern of inquiry to be comprised of five distinguishable stages, or rather four stages of inquiry proper plus the initial conditions necessary for inquiry to arise that forms the ground, as it were, on which these stages are built. Although he outlines them in order, these stages aren’t meant to be fully distinct ‘steps’ that are always taken separately and sequentially, but should be seen as phases in a continual process in which they can overlap and which can involve going back and forth between stages while the inquiry is underway. The ground or antecedent condition that precedes inquiry proper is a felt awareness of the indeterminate or problematic situation’s uncertainty. This awareness of the problem is itself initially indeterminate, manifesting, for example, as an experience of being ‘called up short’ in what we are doing or trying to do such that we are no longer ‘geared into’ the environment in which we are acting but feel taken out of it:²⁶ in Dewey’s terms, one’s behaviour and habits no longer cohere with the conditions in which one is acting. Being called up short in this way, i.e., taken out of the flow of action or its continuity with environment, is accompanied by awareness of a need or desire to restore continuity by instituting a new coherent situation (*Ibid.*, 109-10).

This need or desire motivates the first stage of inquiry proper, which involves getting clear on where exactly the situation’s lack of coherence lies by determining—i.e., forming a determinate conception of—the problem. It is only when we have a problem in mind that we can begin to go about solving it, and to do this we first need to recognize the situation we are in as ‘problematic’ in some way or another. This is done, in part, through selective attention, where some elements of the situation are highlighted as relevant while others are put in the background. For example, a vague awareness of discomfort in one’s abdomen can motivate one to attend to

²⁶ An analysis of such an experience is found in Heidegger’s discussion of the breakdown of a piece of equipment whereby our relation to it shifts from it being what he calls ‘ready-to-hand’ for us to it being ‘present-at-hand’; see Heidegger 1962, §15 H.68-69, §16 H.73-75.

where in one's abdomen the sensation is coming from and to its felt qualities. This attention can lead to determining the sensation as a feeling of hunger, rather than one of, say, indigestion or anxiousness, which gives one an idea of the problem, viz., that one's body needs to replenish its energy so as to fuel its actions. Like all stages of inquiry proper, Dewey takes the institution of a problem to involve the exercise of both observational and "ideational" or conceptual capacities (*Ibid.*, 119), although in most stages one type of capacity will be predominant: here, it is the observational, although our conceptual capacities will also come into play, e.g., in considering what previously felt sensations the occurrent feeling might resemble so as to recognize it as hunger and not anxiety, or in thinking about what, and how much, one has eaten that day, when one last ate, etc., so as to recognize it as hunger and not indigestion.

When one is aware of the problem to be solved one will have a better idea of what kind of thing might resolve the problematic situation; as Dewey notes, a clear and determinate statement of a problem "has, in the very terms of its statement, reference to a possible solution" (*Ibid.*, 112). Nevertheless, there are likely to be multiple possible solutions available given the various components that form the situation. While the situation as a whole is unsettled or uncertain, at least some of its components, taken individually, will be settled or certain since no situation can be *entirely* indeterminate and still allow for conscious awareness on the part of the subject. Dewey calls these individually settled components "the facts of the case" or "the terms of the problem" (*Ibid.*, 113), with these determining the possibilities for action available to the subject in that situation. Since getting clear on the problem in the first stage of inquiry will include determining which facts or elements of one's situation are relevant to the problem—i.e., the problem's 'terms'—, it will suggest various possible solutions that one could actualize by working to alter the conditions of one's situation, e.g., by rearranging its components.

The second stage of inquiry involves making explicit the suggestions that result from attention to the facts of the case or elements of the situation, and taking them as hypotheses to be tested, where examining a suggestion and reasoning about its relevance to the problem and how it might solve it makes the mere suggestion into what Dewey calls an "idea" (*Ibid.*, 114). Since

these suggestions and ideas for potential solutions are not yet actualized, and so are not themselves present components of the situation, Dewey writes that they “must be embodied in some symbol” (*Ibid.*), by which he means that they must either be ‘represented’ in imagination or in an external sign such as written language, a diagram, etc. This is necessary in order for us to be able to survey the range of possible solutions and examine each one in relation to the situation, e.g., inferring what new situation would result from enacting that solution and how coherent the new situation would be, which is to say how effective it would be to solve the problem, and in relation to other possible solutions, e.g., comparing their likely effectiveness.

Reasoning about hypotheses, and their development and refinement through this reasoning, constitutes the third stage of inquiry. This stage results in a precise idea of which particular actions can be taken to test the most promising hypothesis or set of hypotheses, with the fourth—and when successful, final—stage of inquiry involving testing one or more hypothesized solutions by putting them into practice and observing their results. This testing is necessary for a process to count as inquiry in the full sense; merely to posit a possible solution and imagine it resolving the problem one faces without testing it in action is not yet to inquire about the solution, since whether or not the hypothesized solution actually will bring coherence to the situation if enacted remains undetermined. As Dewey puts it, “the final test of [the rightness of a solution] is determined when it actually functions—that is, when it is put into operation so as to institute by means of observations facts not previously observed, and is then used to organize them with other facts into a coherent whole” (*Ibid.*).

The process of positing possible actions and their likely effects on the situation by ‘embodying’ these actions and the ‘facts of the case’ in a set of ‘symbols’, and reasoning about their likely effectiveness, is what Dewey elsewhere calls “dramatic rehearsal” (Dewey 1922, 132). He takes dramatic rehearsal to be an operation of the imagination that we might call ‘simulation’, which shows that he does not mean his use of ‘embodied’ to suggest that the ideas must be externalized or embodied in physical form, but rather that he counts imaginative

simulation itself to ‘embody’ the ideas that are simulated (*LTI*, 114).²⁷ So, while he insists that the final, testing stage must involve putting an hypothesis into practice in order to observe its actual effects, Dewey allows that forming, initially testing, and refining hypotheses by reason can be acts of imagination—or, as we might put it colloquially, can occur ‘in the head’.

That the stages of inquiry Dewey describes are not as hierarchical as they might seem from the above outline. Inquirers will often go back and forth between various stages at different moments in the process. Forming and reasoning about hypotheses and testing them in dramatic rehearsal or concrete action can modify the conception of the problem, leading to new observations and the disclosure of other relevant ‘facts of the case,’ in turn suggesting further hypothetical solutions, etc. This is a kind of reflective equilibrium of questions, hypotheses, and outcomes progressively refining each other until they bring coherence to the situation and “convert [its elements] into a unified whole” (*LTI*, 108), thereby ending the inquiry. As Dewey insists, this is an ongoing process in the life of an organism in which, as J.E. Tiles notes, “what is settled at one stage is exposed to further inquiry at later stages, at which times it may be reconfirmed or overthrown, deepened or revised” (Tiles 1988, 106).

Also, for Dewey no two situations are ever identical, since at least some elements will differ from one occasion to another. Each uncertainty motivating inquiry and each corresponding solution will be to some degree *particular* to a situation, with the methods and criteria for success of each inquiry being relative to the uncertainty that prompts it. Thus, inquiry is properly construed in each instance as a search for a solution to a problem that is at least somewhat unique. A ‘one-size-fits-all’ response can work only if the problem sufficiently resembles the generic one the response was meant to solve, but reliance on such generic responses can fail because of the ways in which the problem differs from the generic model.

²⁷ One way to explain this would be to say that imagining an action or a state of affairs necessarily involves a quasi-perceptual imagination of the action or state of affairs, or of some ‘sign’ standing for these, e.g., a diagram or sentences that one imagines hearing in an ‘inner monologue’. I do not have space here to enter into the debate over propositional imagination, but it is plausible to take propositional imagining itself to be quasi-perceptual with a person imagining seeing, hearing, or saying the words and sentences that express the propositions. For an argument that all imagination is quasi-perceptual according to some sense modality, see James 1890, vol. 2, 44-75.

With the basics of Dewey's model of inquiry in place, we can turn to Collingwood's account of expression, keeping in mind that Dewey allows that this common pattern of inquiry will differ when it comes to various modes of inquiry in different areas of life. As he writes, "because of the nature of the problems with which they are concerned, the emphasis upon the factors involved varies widely in the [various] modes" (*LTI*, 105).

2.3.2 Collingwoodian Expression as a Kind of Inquiry

As discussed in Section 1, Collingwood takes artistic creation to centrally involve the expression of psychical feelings, or the qualitative (affective and sensory) dimensions of experience, where a feeling is not known to consciousness prior to its expression; thus, expression, for Collingwood, is a process of coming to understand and articulate the precise felt quality of a particular experience, i.e., of clarifying it for consciousness. Since this is a matter of figuring out something of which one is not yet aware, it can be described as inquiring into the character of one's experience—i.e., into what exactly one feels—but more needs to be said to show that it counts as inquiry on Dewey's model.

Expression, for Collingwood, starts with an indeterminate, as-yet-unexpressed feeling at what he calls the psychical level of experience. This is a pre-conscious bodily registering of sensations and affects at the fringes of awareness, with Collingwood using the term 'feelings' to refer both to sensations and their emotional or affective charges, which for Collingwood occur together, with sensations carrying emotional charges and emotions corresponding with sensations, with these being separable only by a subsequent act of thought (*PA*, 161-64; *NL*, 4.1).²⁸ Although he does not state it explicitly, it is clear from his remarks that Collingwood takes this psychical level of experience to be ongoing and ever-present as long as we are conscious; thus, psychical feelings are not special occurrences so much as they are the ground of our experience and mental life, including reasoning and knowing (*PA*, 164-66; *NL*, 4.3). This is

²⁸ Collingwood is hesitant to say that *every* sensation carries an emotional charge, or that every emotion at the psychical level is a charge on a sensation, but this hesitancy is due to the difficulty, and perhaps impossibility, of verifying any generalization about feelings as opposed to particular statements about particular feelings (*NL*, 5.55), and he does assert that this is probably true on the basis of all his experience and introspection (*PA*, 162; *NL*, 4.11).

comparable to Dewey's notion of a 'situation' as an ongoing transaction between an organism and its environment, with having psychical feelings on the one hand, and being involved in a situation on the other, both being preconditions for becoming aware of a feeling that we want to get clear on and being in a problematic situation that we want to solve, respectively.

Many of the feelings that make up the field of our psychical experience at any moment—i.e., the sensory-affective manifold that William James called a “great blooming buzzing confusion” (James 1890, vol. 1, 488)—are likely to go unexpressed since our capacities for attention are finite. With those feelings we do express, the process of expression is initiated when we first become aware of a particular feeling and start to direct our attention toward it. At this point, one can be only vaguely aware *that* one feels something, but just *what* this feeling is remains indeterminate. As Collingwood writes: “When a man is said to express emotion ... [at] first, he is conscious of having an emotion, but not conscious of what this emotion is. All he is conscious of is a perturbation or excitement, which he feels going on within him, but of whose nature he is ignorant. While he is in this state, all he can say [...] is: ‘I feel ... I don’t know what I feel’” (*PA*, 109). This parallels the initial awareness of a situation’s uncertainty that Dewey takes to precede and motivate inquiry. It is worth noting that Dewey describes uncertain situations in terms that are synonymous with Collingwood’s ‘perturbation’, including “disturbed”, “unsettled”, and “troubled” (*LTI*, 109). This characterization is echoed in Collingwood’s description of the state of not knowing what one feels as a “helpless and oppressed condition” and of successful expression as lightening and easing one’s mind by freeing one from this condition (*PA*, 109-10), where this is in line with Dewey’s notion of successful inquiry bringing coherence to the inquirer’s situation and restoring equilibrium in her relations with her environment.

Expressing this indeterminate feeling involves directing one’s attention to it which in Collingwood’s terms raises it to consciousness, i.e., shifts the focus of our attention so that the feeling is no longer on the fringe or “penumbral region” of our awareness but closer to the “focal region” (*NL*, 4.44). This act of selective attention apprehends and fixes the ephemeral and momentary—or what Collingwood calls the “here-and-now” (*Ibid.*, 4.4)—feeling before our

mind, letting us attend to it in thought even when the feeling itself has passed, e.g., by remembering it. Collingwood takes this apprehending and fixing a feeling to be an act of imagination that makes the feeling an object of thought—or, in phenomenological terms, foregrounds it as an intentional object—, though the feeling is not yet clarified at this point, and so the object of thought is still indeterminate or vague. Being struck by a perturbation or otherwise noticing that one feels something-or-other parallels the awareness of an uncertain situation, so this selective attending to and fixing of the feeling parallels Dewey's first stage of inquiry which involves determining the problem with which one is faced, i.e., formulating a conception of just what is imbalanced or not cohering in one's situation.

Although in Collingwood's account the feeling to be expressed remains indeterminate at this stage, we can still speak of a 'problem' that is determined, which is to clarify and articulate the feeling to which one has begun to attend. Moreover, while Dewey takes observation of the facts of the case to be crucial to the determination of a problem, there seems no reason not to count introspective attention as a kind of observation in the case of expression, especially since Dewey takes the observation that occurs at this stage of inquiry to be a step on the way to translating the facts of the case, and by extension one's conception of the problem, into what he calls 'symbols' in order to relate them to imagined possible actions and their anticipated effects in what he calls 'dramatic rehearsal', where turning observations into symbols is analogous to what Collingwood describes as fixing a feeling in imagination so that one can 'picture' it after it is felt.

What of Dewey's second and third stages of inquiry, in which this dramatic rehearsal occurs? Collingwood is vague here, saying only that after attending to one's feeling one expresses it, without explicitly specifying how this is done apart from saying that expressing a feeling is not describing or arousing it (*PA*, 111-12). While he does not outline a set of steps that artists follow when clarifying and expressing feelings to which they have started to turn their attention, this is in line with his argument that expression is "an activity of which there can be no technique" (*Ibid.*, 111). That is, it would be misguided to look for a set of sufficient conditions for what he means by expression that can be generalized or known in advance and then applied

as means toward the end of expressing oneself. Although no technique or formula can be generalized, we can get a loose idea of what these stages of expression involve by looking at examples of what artists do when creating, where these can be generalized to some extent even if a specific set of actions that could serve as the basis for a technique cannot.

To this end, Collingwood gives an example of a painter stepping back and regarding his work as it develops, alternating between observation, judgment, and action, making revisions in response to what he sees and thinking as he goes “I am not satisfied with that line; let us try it this way ... and this way ... and this way ... there! that will do!” (*Ibid.*, 281). There are analogues of this kind of process in other art forms: an author writing a poem, for example, will try out certain words and phrases, varying their order or substituting certain words with others, changing punctuation and spacing, etc., while observing the effect of each change with an eye to ‘getting it right’. What exactly ‘getting it right’ means here, and how an artist determines this, still need to be explained in order for Collingwood’s full account of expression to become clear, but this process of alternating between enacting an artistic choice (e.g., altering the composition with a brush-stroke, replacing a word with a synonym, etc.), observing its effect, and making an additional change in response to this observation clearly parallels the formation, refinement, and initial testing of hypotheses that make up Dewey’s second and third stages of inquiry.

In a medium where artistic choices can be tried and easily revised if they do not work, such as poetry and other forms of written literature, these choices—i.e., hypotheses as to what will articulate and express what one feels—do not need to be tested solely in imagination or ‘dramatic rehearsal’ but can be worked out in a material, perceptible form, e.g., a poet who does not merely think of a word or phrase but who writes it on paper to see how it looks ‘on the page’. On the other hand, in a medium where actions cannot be undone as easily, such as oil painting or architecture, artistic possibilities and choices may need to be rehearsed in imagination, or via models. Thus, the second, third, and fourth stages of Dewey’s model of inquiry would seem to overlap more in artistic expression than in, say, scientific inquiry, with formulating and refining ‘hypotheses’—i.e., possible creative choices—being coextensive with testing them in practice.

This process of imagining a possible way in which a work-in-progress might develop, testing, and refining or revising it continues until the parts of the work—which are the results of, and so can be taken for present purposes as equivalent to, the sum total of the artist’s creative choices and actions—fit together or cohere in such a way that they articulate and clarify an understanding of the qualitative or felt dimension of the relevant experience of the artist’s. Apprehending a finished work as a whole by grasping its parts in their relations to each other, and to the whole that they form, is, for Collingwood, identical to apprehending the clarified idea of the feeling that they express, i.e., what he calls an “emotion of consciousness” (*Ibid.*, 234) as distinct from the psychical feeling out of which it developed. This parallels the final, successful test of a hypothesized solution in the fourth stage of Dewey’s model of inquiry: in both cases, the problem that drives the inquiry is solved.

Just as expression does not require that every prospective artistic choice be refined separately in dramatic rehearsal before being tested in practice, it also differs from the scientific and practical forms of inquiry with which Dewey was concerned, insofar as successful expression, which brings a particular inquiry to a close, need not always involve testing one’s hypotheses in a material or external form outside of imagination. In other words, with expression, the ‘dramatic rehearsal’ can sometimes itself count as the final performance: this can be seen from Collingwood’s admission that some artworks can be created through the artist’s imaginative activity without being externalized, e.g., a short poem that one works out ‘in one’s head’ but never writes down or recites. This might be thought to be a disanalogy between Collingwood’s and Dewey’s accounts, since Dewey insists that simply noting a problem, hypothesizing solutions, and testing them by reasoning or in dramatic rehearsal will not count as inquiry without the fourth stage of actually testing one or more of these hypotheses in practice to see if they in fact work to solve the problem (see *LTI*, 114, 121). This is not, however, a disanalogy that would discount expression from being a form of inquiry, but is an instance of a way in which the general pattern of inquiry that Dewey lays out can differ when applied in different domains, as he allows (see *Ibid.*, 101, 105).

What is essential for inquiry, according to Dewey, and which makes the fourth stage necessary is that hypotheses are tested in ways that could work to actually solve the problem at hand, and what Dewey disallows is merely imagining that a potential solution works, or inferring that it will work without testing this inference. Where Dewey is considering scientific and common sense or practical inquiry, his point is that merely imagining ways in which a hypothesis may be put into practice and imagining the likely results is not enough to actually test it, but is nevertheless important as preparatory to actual testing. However, with inquiries in other domains, testing a hypothesis in thought or in imagination might be enough to work to solve the problem: a mathematical problem, for instance, can be solved ‘in the head’ since to test a possible solution to this kind of problem just is to work it out by reasoning. With expression, where the problem to be solved is to clarify and articulate the felt or qualitative element of an experience, if imagining something—e.g., a certain arrangement of words or sounds—can be sufficient for clarifying and articulating this, then the fourth stage of inquiry can occur through imaginative activity alone. The relevant difference here is not between testing in thought and testing in action, but rather between merely imagining (i.e., pretending) that a particular combination of, e.g., words or sounds—in the case of a poem or a song, respectively—successfully articulates what one feels and, on the other hand, imagining a combination that really does articulate it. The latter should, I argue, count as really testing the imagined work, just as mathematical solutions can really be tested through reasoning alone. The former, on the other hand, would be disallowed by Dewey from counting as an actual instance of inquiry, and would be an instance of what Collingwood calls the “corruption of consciousness” (*PA*, 217-19) as opposed to expression proper.²⁹

A second point on which Collingwood’s account might seem not to fit Dewey’s model relates to Dewey’s third stage of inquiry, which involves reasoning about the hypothesized

²⁹ To put this another way, for Dewey a solution *works* when it actually modifies the uncertain situation by “re-ordering” the elements of the situation “to produce a settled and unified [new] situation” (*LTI*, 121), not by merely imagining how these might be re-ordered in cases where imagining is distinct from doing. However, when it comes to expression as the clarification of what one feels, imagining a certain ordering of elements can sometimes count as actually re-ordering them, since this can be a way of more clearly conceptualizing or ‘picturing’, and hence articulating, what one feels.

solutions to the problem in order to make explicit and refine the meaning of the ideas for action that they contain, which include their likely effects on the problematic situation given their relation to the elements of this situation or the ‘facts of the case’. For Collingwood, however, the imaginative activity that is involved in expression, and hence in artistic creation, occurs at a level of mental activity that is prior to reasoning or the relation of ideas, which he considers to be an activity of intellect rather than imagination (*Ibid.*, 215-16, 252-53). If the ‘hypotheses’ in cases of expression are the artistic choices that consist of possible ways of acting on, or with, the medium in which expression occurs, reasoning in the sense of considering them alongside each other and drawing inferences as to which will best express what one feels would seem to fall into what Collingwood calls ‘craft’ as opposed to expression. As he would argue, one is unable to draw these inferences unless one already has a clear conception of the feeling one is expressing, but having such a conception would mean that one has already expressed it (cf. *Ibid.*, 115-16).

This disanalogy is merely apparent and so is not a problem for my reading of expression, on Collingwood’s account, as a form of Deweyan inquiry. What is essential to Dewey’s third stage is not the activity of reasoning *per se* but the judgments that are formed about the hypothesized solutions through relating our ideas of these solutions with our ideas of the elements of our situation, i.e., the ‘facts of the case’. This lets us judge how the elements of the situation fit together and how a change to one element, or the addition of a new one, would affect others to change the situation as a whole. In cases of scientific inquiry these judgments will be the results of processes of reasoning, although even here Dewey notes that he takes ‘reasoning’ to include more than drawing inferences (*LTI*, 115, fn.7). For inquiry in other domains, if these judgments can be made without the explicit use of reasoning, or at least without employing the kind of reasoning that Collingwood takes to belong to intellect rather than imagination, then whatever activity allows us to make these judgments will fit the requirements of Dewey’s third stage.

When it comes to artistic expression, enacting an artistic choice and observing the results—or veridically imagining the results of enacting it—can allow this judgment to be made, with the artist sensing or feeling, and so not needing to infer, whether the new whole or situation that this

artistic choice brings about is coherent and whether it furthers the artist's attempt to get clear on what she feels. The painter in Collingwood's example who observes the results of his brush strokes while thinking "let us try it this way ... and this way ... and this way ... there! that will do!" (*PA*, 281) is engaged in making just these kinds of judgments, where he is not reasoning intellectually—i.e., calculating and inferring—about how each envisioned brush stroke would affect the rest of the visual arrangement taking form on the canvas, but instead is *seeing* how it does. Depending on the medium, this 'seeing' can be quasi-perceptual or imagined, as in the case of a poet judging that a certain word will fit better in a particular line by imagining 'seeing' or 'hearing' the line, with that word in it, rather than writing it down or speaking it aloud, and observing rather than inferring whether the line so phrased 'works'.

This suggests that some kind of thinking is part of the process of expression and so of artistic creation, even if this is not the kind of thinking that Collingwood calls 'reasoning'. This further suggests that the apparent difference between Dewey's and Collingwood's accounts here is merely terminological, with Collingwood using 'reasoning' to refer to a narrower set of mental activities that involve inference and Dewey using it to refer to "ordered discourse" in general, or the "development of symbol-meanings in relation to one another" (*LTI*, 60), whether this is done through inferring further meanings or in some other way. To get a better sense of what this other way might involve, and how it might be part of the activity of the imagination as conceived within Collingwood's philosophical psychology and so how it might count, in his terms, as a kind of pre-intellectual thinking, we can turn to Dewey's idea of qualitative thought.

2.4 Artistic Expression as Qualitative Thinking

Dewey explores this idea in a pair of under-studied essays: "Affective Thought" (1926; hereafter *AT*) and "Qualitative Thought" (1930).³⁰ These essays occupy a key place in the development of Dewey's holistic account of experience and his view of mind as emergent from the reciprocal

³⁰ Comparatively few works on Dewey include substantial discussions of his notion of qualitative thought: see Alexander 1987, Brigham 1999, Ecker 1963, Garrison 1996, Garrison 1999, Stuhr 1979, Tiles 1988, and Van Camp 2014. Most focus on what I distinguish below as the second sense of the term 'qualitative thought', and among the few that discuss what I will call the third sense—viz., Brigham, Ecker, and Van Camp—, all end up leaving it somewhat vague.

interaction of organism and environment, with the first closely following 1925's *Experience and Nature* and with both setting the stage for the application of the account developed in this work to aesthetics in 1934's *Art as Experience*. The idea of qualitative thought also plays a role in the related development of his logic of inquiry; as Julie Van Camp notes, "Dewey's concern in his writings during the 1930's with the application of his theory of inquiry in many segments of our lives seems to have been a major influence on his attempts to explain 'qualitative thought' during this period", with several of Dewey's remarks indicating that his theories of inquiry and qualitative thought were variations on the same basic idea (Van Camp 2014, 71).

2.4.1 Three Senses of 'Qualitative Thought'

Dewey considers three senses that can be given to the term 'qualitative thought'. The first takes this term to refer to acts of thinking directed towards qualities as their intentional objects, i.e., thinking *about* qualities or qualitative experiences. He notes that "common-sense" thinking can be considered qualitative insofar as it is "concerned with action and its consequences, whether undergone in enjoyment or suffering" (*QT*, 243), given that our actions are often or always responses to, and are experienced in terms of, felt qualities, where the consequences of our actions are similarly registered first as qualitative experiences. Dewey reinforces this point in his *Logic*, noting that "[i]t is by discernment of qualities that the fitness and capacity of things and events for use is decided" (*LTI*, 69). Taking 'qualitative thought' to be thought *about* qualities is relatively straightforward and Dewey does not dwell on this sense of the term; however, he sets up his discussion of the second sense by considering how philosophy has treated qualities, arguing that the standard subject-predicate model, which conceives of qualities as 'properties' that belong or attach to objects distinct from these properties, runs into problems. For one thing, it risks either reifying qualities as entities in addition to the objects to which they attach, in effect making them a kind of object, or taking qualities to be merely subjective.³¹ For another, it fails to

³¹ Cf. Dewey 1916, 3-4, where he notes that one consequence of treating qualities as either objects or as merely subjective state is that "*continuity* is rendered a mystery" (my emphasis).

account for what Dewey calls the “ordinary direct sense” of qualitative description, which takes the things described to be “permeated throughout” by the quality in terms of which they are described, rather than taking them to possess it as one property among others (*QT*, 244).

This idea of qualities *inhering* in and ‘permeating’ objects rather than *adhering* to them as separable properties, and the view that common-sense thinking deals with fundamentally qualitative matters, lead to the second sense of ‘qualitative thought’ with which Dewey is concerned. In this sense, thought is ‘qualitative’ because thinking takes place against a background of qualitative experience that is ‘pre-cognitive’, i.e., directly ‘had’ rather than ‘known’. This directly felt qualitative whole forms the context in which we think, with the objects of thought and our ideas about them arising from and being informed by this whole, of which they are abstractions; this is what Dewey is getting at when he writes that the development and progression of our thoughts is “regulated by qualitative considerations” (*Ibid.*, 243).³² This qualitative whole is what Dewey calls a ‘situation’ which, as we have seen, is central to his theory of inquiry: inharmonious or uncertain situations give us the problems that our inquiries aim to resolve, with a particular situation and the unique problem or uncertainty that it presents setting the terms for what will count as a successful solution for that particular inquiry.

Both the essay on qualitative thought and the *Logic* describe situations as each being constituted and individuated by “a single ... pervasive and internally integrating quality” that is unique to that particular situation, by which “it is dominated and characterized throughout” (*Ibid.*, 246; cf. *LTI*, 74). Thus, for Dewey, thinking not only occurs within situations but is governed by the pervasive qualities that constitute these as the situations they are, insofar as such qualities determine what shows up for us in these situations as objects, how we can take these objects to be related to one another and to ourselves, and the affordances we have for acting with these objects to solve the problems they pose for us. Moreover, the pervasive quality determines how a situation’s ‘parts’ can be meaningful or valuable: as Dewey writes, “[d]istinctions and

³² Note that Dewey’s position here corresponds to Collingwood’s insistence that the ‘psychical’ level of experience is the basis of all mental activity.

relations are instituted *within* a situation”, and without the “controlling presence” of the pervasive quality that constitutes that situation “there is no way to determine the relevancy, weight or coherence of any designated distinction or relation” (*LTI*, 74, original emphasis), where the “relevancy, weight or coherence” of things includes their meaning or value for us.

It is important to note that what Dewey calls pervasive quality is not *a* quality that we experience in the way that a particular feeling or sensation is; it is not an element of that situation that is experienced directly but rather a ‘colouring’ that things, including their sensory and affective qualities, have within that situation, which gives them a coherence and unites them as being elements of *that* situation (*QT*, 247; *LTI*, 73-74). In this, it is comparable to what Merleau-Ponty calls a ‘style’ (see *PhP*, 342),³³ and to the ‘family resemblance’ discussed by Wittgenstein, which is not itself any one of the features, or any set of features, that members of the ‘family’ will share in various combinations (see Wittgenstein 1953, §67). Thus, Dewey is not saying that felt qualities like, e.g., anger, tranquility, greenness, or hardness belong constitutively to situations over and above the objects and subjects of the experiences that occur therein. These specific qualities—which, unlike the pervasive quality of a situation, are, for Dewey, directly ‘had’ components of an experience—are qualities of subjects and objects, respectively; or, to be more precise are the ways in which the experience, *qua* relation, manifests or realizes itself in its ‘subject-poles’ and ‘object-poles’, as it were.

Since most of our vocabulary for speaking of the qualitative aspects of experience refers to specific qualities, whether feelings of subjects or ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ qualities of objects, Dewey is aware that pervasive qualities are difficult to describe adequately: he writes that what Santayana called ‘tertiary qualities’—e.g., “distressing, perplexing, cheerful, disconsolate”—are better able to suggest pervasive qualities, since they refer to both subject- and object-poles of an experience and so are more suited to describe that experience ‘interactionally’, although he notes that they are not entirely adequate (*LTI*, 75). Still, even if the pervasive quality that runs through

³³ See also *PhP* 134, 188, and 330 for examples of the ‘style’ of a narrative, an utterance, and a perceptual field, respectively. Cf. *QT*, 245, where Dewey likens pervasive qualities to the ‘characters’ we ascribe to people to get at a certain manner or way of doing things that tends to run through their actions.

the elements of a situation is not experienced directly, being an aspect of the background against which elements are foregrounded, it can be itself foregrounded (or, in phenomenological terms, ‘thematized’) in another situation, e.g., one of active reflection on the first—with the new one having its own pervasive quality that marks it off from the first (*Ibid.*, 74; *QT*, 248)).

The third sense of ‘qualitative thought’ involves thinking *in*, or *with*, qualities rather than in words or propositions; however, given that Dewey’s primary concern in the 1930 essay is with thinking in relation to unified wholes and consummatory events, most of the focus is on the second sense of qualitative thought, and just what it is to think *with* qualities is left somewhat vague (see Van Camp 2014, 73). It is apparent that Dewey takes art-making to exemplify this kind of thinking, but much of what he writes about the “logic of artistic construction” (*QT*, 251) refers to an underlying qualitative whole that “controls the thinking of the artist” by governing the artist’s “selection of detail[s]” and their “relation, or integration” (*Ibid.*) in making the work, without saying how this selection and relation of details proceeds.

Nevertheless, certain passages and remarks, while still vague, are more suggestive of what this kind of thinking might involve. For instance, in one passage he identifies thinking with controlled association and notes that although philosophers have typically focused on the association of *ideas*, what we associate can be objects we experience rather than merely the ‘representations’ we form of them ‘in our heads’. “When one, seeing smoke, thinks of fire,” he writes, “he is associating objects, not just states in his own mind” (*Ibid.*, 255-56). While the smoke that is seen needs to be registered ‘mentally’ in order for it to be associated with an unseen fire, on Dewey’s account the perception does not need to be converted into a mental entity called ‘*an idea*’ which we then associate with another mental entity, e.g., ‘*the idea of fire*’, through an act of reasoning. Rather, in perceiving a dark cloud rising in the air *as smoke*, this visual (and possibly olfactory) qualitative experience recalls memories of prior experiences that were qualitatively similar and which included other qualities, among them being those involved in perceiving fire: feeling heat, seeing orange licks of flame, etc. These further qualities of the recalled experiences are associated with qualities of the current experience, not primarily through

a deliberate inference but by our acquired and embodied perceptual habits (*Ibid.*, 256; cf. *AT*, 106),³⁴ which is to say that this association takes place within the operation of perception itself and does not involve a ‘higher’ mental process such as inferential reasoning.³⁵ However, since the controlled association of qualities just is thinking for Dewey, this will count as an instance of thinking despite not involving our intellect but staying within the workings of perception, i.e., at the level of qualitative experience.

This example fits with a remark that Dewey makes in an earlier passage to the effect that qualities are not static or final but involve an intrinsic “movement or transition in some direction” (*Ibid.*, 254), where this directed movement is part of the development of the situation in which these qualities occur. In terms of the smoke-and-fire example, this would mean that our qualitative experience of the smoke *itself* ‘points to’ or orients our experience towards the qualities of the flames.³⁶ While this example concerns things that we typically associate, through inferential reasoning, in terms of cause and effect, Dewey’s remark suggests that the association need not be causal. For a non-causal example of an association that occurs at the level of qualitative experience, we might consider the way in which a certain arrangement of colours or musical notes can ‘point to’ or ‘suggest’ additional colours or notes that would extend the arrangement, not merely additively but what we can call ‘expansively’, developing in continuity with the pervasive quality that characterizes it as *that* arrangement or sequence.³⁷

³⁴ See also *AE*, 74: “What is expressed will be neither the past events that have exercised their shaping influence nor yet the literal existing occasion. It will be, in the degree of its spontaneity, an intimate union of the features of present existence with the values that past experience have [sic] incorporated in personality.”

³⁵ If this association leads to a subsequent experience of seeing the flames that are ‘attached to’ this smoke, Dewey would say the smoke that we first see, and the fire that we subsequently see, *qua* objects, are what get associated in this process, with the memories of previous qualitative experiences facilitating this association rather than being themselves what get associated. In other words, the process need not be one of first associating the smoke we see now with our memories of a previous fire, and then associating our memories of that fire with the fire that is currently burning; rather, the smoke that is seen now and the fire that is burning now are what come to be associated through this process of perceiving.

³⁶ Borrowing a term from Husserl, we could express this point by saying that our experience of the smoke ‘*protends*’ a further qualitative experience of the fire; on protention, see Husserl 1978, 168-69, and Husserl 1991 generally.

³⁷ This is not to say that particular qualities—e.g., a specific shade of red, or a certain harmonic triad—conceived on their own apart from a context in which they are experienced, will *intrinsically* or *objectively* (i.e., as objects ‘in themselves’) suggest particular other qualities. Not only would this simplify matters and limit in advance how qualities could be meaningfully arranged, but it presupposes the kind of subject-object dichotomy to which Dewey was opposed. Rather, the claim is that qualities, conceived as emergent within an experience-relation of an organism and its situation,

2.4.2 Thinking In and With Qualities

These points begin to clarify the third sense of qualitative thought but they depend on a great deal of extrapolation from a few remarks made in Dewey's 1930 essay. Looking beyond this essay to the earlier "Affective Thought" and to *Art as Experience* supports my reading of these remarks. In the former, he refers at one point to "the control exercised by emotion in re-shaping natural conditions, and the place of the imagination, under the influence of desire, in re-creating the world into a more orderly place" (*AT*, 107), where his reference to these as "*so-called nonrational factors*" (*Ibid.*, my emphasis) suggests that exercising feeling and imagination in these ways can count as thinking even if it falls outside the scope of reasoning as traditionally conceived. At another point he writes of "the relat[ing] of forms to one another" and of visual artists "differentiat[ing] and integrat[ing] their experiences in terms of color itself" (*AT*, 109), where differentiating between and integrating (i.e., associating) elements of experience fits Dewey's definition of "concrete thinking" as the "intelligent selection and adaptation of means and materials" (Dewey 1910, 139). Moreover, this is described as something done *with* qualities that occurs at the level of qualitative experience, rather than with verbal and numerical signs at the level of reasoning.

Dewey says more about thinking in and with qualities in *Art as Experience*, especially in his chapter on expression in which he describes the artistic process. For instance, he writes of expression as the "carrying forward to completion of an inspiration *by means of the objective material of perception and imagery*" (*AE*, 69, my emphasis), where this last phrase can be read as synonymous with what he refers to elsewhere as qualities.³⁸ Shortly thereafter, he writes that in a genuine process of expression the selection and assembly of this 'material' will be governed by "felt emotion" more than by deliberate calculation and "conscious intent" (*Ibid.*, 71) and notes

will point to or suggest other qualities as part of that experience. Cf. Dewey 1910, 135, where he writes that in our dealings with them "things are clothed by the suggestions they arouse".

³⁸ See *AE*, 76: "Those who are called artists have for their subject-matter the qualities of things of direct experience; 'intellectual' inquirers deal with these qualities at one remove, through the medium of symbols that stand for qualities..."

that the determination of how the parts of an artwork—e.g., the words of a poem, the incidents of a narrative, the tones, hues, and shades of a painting, etc.—will fit together so as to form an organically unified whole “is accomplished by emotion” (*Ibid.*, 73). In other words, when expressing, as distinct from making things solely in the mode of what Collingwood calls craft, an artist will ‘feel her way around’ her medium and materials as she works, rather than reasoning about how to arrange the materials she has at hand, although this is not a ‘blind groping’ but a thoughtful, albeit pre-rational, process.³⁹ The complete work—i.e., the final arrangement of the material—is realized by the artist based on this felt sense of the qualities of the materials and how they hang together, rather than consciously envisioned beforehand and then externalized.

Dewey describes this as thinking with qualities themselves, writing that “[t]hinking directly in terms of colors, tones, images [i.e., what artists do], is a different operation technically from thinking in words,” and arguing that this is a necessary complement to verbal reasoning since “[t]here are values and meanings that can be expressed only by immediately visible and audible qualities” but which cannot be captured in words (*Ibid.*, 77, my emphasis). Even if this is a largely pre-rational process that proceeds by what might be called ‘intuition’ rather than deliberative calculation (*Ibid.*, 200), it results in the generation or realization of ideas, including ideas that make explicit affective and sensory experiences. As an artist manages and organizes her materials, Dewey explains, her thoughts and feelings are likewise ordered, at least to the extent that she is attending to, and feeling the effects of, the changes in her medium that her actions are making (*Ibid.*, 77-78). This is not a feature of artistic creation alone, with Dewey writing that “[w]hen there is genuine artistry in scientific inquiry and philosophic speculation”, i.e., whenever thinking is not mechanical or formulaic but creative in a way that allows it to go beyond what is already known and familiar, “a thinker proceeds ... *by means of meanings that exist immediately as feelings having qualitative color*” (*Ibid.*, 125, my emphasis; cf. 78).⁴⁰

³⁹ That is, it is an instance of thinking but not of ‘reasoning’ in the sense of drawing inferences between propositions, with some being taken to be reasons for accepting others.

⁴⁰ See *AE*, 124: “We cannot grasp any idea [or] possess it in its full force, until we have felt and sensed it, as much so as if it were an odor or color. [...] Different ideas have their different ‘feels’, their immediate qualitative aspects, just as much

These remarks show that the third sense of qualitative thinking is operative in Dewey's thought, and moreover that he held this kind of thinking with qualities to be primary in artistic activities but not to be exclusive to the sphere of art, being an important component of scientific and intellectual thinking as well. They also give us a sense of what Dewey took this kind of thinking to involve; however, he was not as explicit on this front as he could have been, and just what it is to think "directly in terms of colours, tones, images," etc., or to have one's thinking proceed "by means of [felt, qualitatively coloured] meanings", is under-explained. What Dewey's remarks imply about what this kind of thinking consists in and how it plays out in practice can be unpacked and clarified with the help of some examples.

As we have seen, Dewey understands thinking to be the controlled (i.e., intentional) selection and association or arrangement of the 'materials' that comprise a situation—where these include, but are not limited to, ideas and propositions about elements of that situation—, especially when this results in something that goes beyond these 'materials' themselves: a new idea, a new way of relating things, a new situation, etc. Thinking directly in and with qualities, then, will involve actively⁴¹ selecting and organizing materials (broadly construed) on the basis of one's apprehension of their qualitative character, both sensory and affective. In other words, the association of things takes place within perception (or quasi-perceptual imagination) based on their qualitative characters being seen, heard, felt, etc., to go together or relate to one another; Dewey describes this as a matter of sensing or feeling *where* a work in progress is going, *how* what we have done so far is leading there, and *what* to do next in order to get it there (*Ibid.*, 150). The selection of these elements also occurs within perception, imagination, and action based on a felt apprehension of their fitting together *well* or appropriately, where Dewey acknowledges this kind of apprehension when he writes of the "immediate sense of things in perception as belonging together or as jarring; as reënforcing or interfering" (*Ibid.*, 52).

as anything else. One who is thinking his way through a complicated problem finds direction on his way by means of this property of ideas. Their qualities stop him when he enters the wrong path and send him ahead when he hits the right one." Cf. *PA*, 266-68, where Collingwood discusses emotional charges on ideas and intellectual activities.

⁴¹ As an intentional and controlled activity, it will be one in which the agent is 'mentally present' and actively engaged, as opposed to merely habitual, automatic, or mechanical activity/behaviour.

As an example, consider a painter applying a certain colour, in a certain size and shape, to a certain spot on her canvas in response to her perceptual and affective assessment of the colours and shapes already there and the relations between them, i.e., how they look and feel when apprehended together. The choice to add *this* colour to the canvas so as to bring about a new arrangement of colours, with the newly added ‘part’ changing the whole and therewith the relation of the other ‘parts’ to each other, contains an implicit (provisional) judgment that the new arrangement is preferable to the previous one. Such a judgment requires the artist to have compared the whole formed by the existing colours and shapes with the new one that would result from adding that colour to that part of the canvas.⁴² If the comparison between these (actual or potential) qualitative wholes takes place within perception (or quasi-perceptual imagination), and if the selection of one of these wholes over the other(s) and the choice to act to bring it about are made in response to how these wholes look and feel, then it would seem to be a case of what Dewey means by thinking directly *with* colours and of having one’s thinking guided by the felt ‘meaning’ of the qualitative arrangements perceived or imagined: i.e., how it feels to apprehend them.⁴³

We might think of similar examples of, say, composers apprehending (e.g., ‘hearing’ in imagination) various possible directions in which a sequence of sounds could be developed and choosing to follow one line of development on the basis of a felt judgment that the musical piece they envision resulting from such a development would be preferable to the pieces that would result if the composition-in-progress took a different turn, or poets attending to the sounds and the look on the page of various words and phrases and choosing to use a certain word or phrase rather than another in a particular line, and to structure the lines in a certain way—e.g., according

⁴² In practice, artists will likely consider many possible new arrangements that would result from a variety of choices, e.g., the difference that would be made to the developing composition if the positioning and dimensions of the new colour were varied, or if different colours were used in each position. And this is only to mention colour, shape, and position within the composition; there are several other factors that could be considered: the texture of a painted area on the canvas, whether it is flat or built up through *impasto*, whether it is smooth or shows traces of the brushstroke, etc.

⁴³ We might call this ‘*meaningfulness*’ to distinguish it from semiotic forms of meaning (semantic, symbolic, etc.) This is in line with how Dewey uses ‘meaning’ in the remarks quoted, and with the general pragmatist conception of meaning as the difference that something makes in experience.

to a certain metrical rhythm—based on their felt and perceived qualities as well as, or more than, their semantic meaning. And the examples need not be related to art. We might also consider someone driving in slippery, low-visibility conditions who is actively attending to the feeling of the road through his grasp on the steering wheel and its connection to the tires, judging when and how far or hard to turn the wheel, and when to press down or ease up on the brake pedal, based on feeling the results of each degree of movement of his hands and foot. While the activities in these examples can be described in terms of inferences from observed facts to a conclusion about what to do, this reconstructs the thought process after the fact from the perspective of reflective thought, and is not a description of the steps that the agent is actively going through in his or her head in the moment of observing and acting.

2.4.3 Is Qualitative Thinking Compatible with Collingwood's Aesthetics?

Now that we have a clearer idea of Dewey's notion of qualitative thought, especially in its third sense of thinking that is done with qualitative material at the level of perception and imagination, we are in a position to answer the question that prompted our investigation of this notion. This was whether Dewey's account of inquiry, and specifically its third stage which involves reasoning, is compatible with Collingwood's account of expression and its underlying philosophical psychology, which distinguishes imagination from reason, or 'intellection', and locates artistic activity within the sphere of the former. The function in the third stage of inquiry of what Dewey calls 'reasoning' is to clarify the meanings of the elements of the situation in relation both to one another and the overall situation, and to judge the plausibility of various hypothesized solutions. This can be done through qualitative thinking insofar as it apprehends relations between qualitative elements, associates or organizes them into new relations, and evaluates the coherence or harmony of the qualitative wholes they form.

Since qualitative thinking occurs at the level of concrete felt experience rather than abstract intellectual reasoning, with relations being apprehended through perception or quasi-perceptual imagination and their actual or potential organization being evaluated through affective

judgments, this seems as if it should count for Collingwood as an activity at the pre-intellectual level of mind that he calls imagination. This apparent compatibility is strengthened by Collingwood's claim that "consciousness", which here is used synonymously with imagination, "is thought in its absolutely fundamental and original shape" (*PA*, 216), and his characterization of imagination as where "the activity of thought makes contact with the merely psychical life of feeling" (*Ibid.*, 171). Statements such as these show that Collingwood counts imagination as a kind of thinking, and one that is not just about, but is in contact with, felt qualities.

However, certain other statements would seem explicitly to prohibit qualitative thinking, as outlined above, from counting as an activity of the imagination or from being a fundamental part of the process of artistic expression. In discussing the relationship between intellect and imagination he states that it is "[t]he work of intellect ... to apprehend or construct relations" (*Ibid.*, 216) and distinguishes between primary and secondary forms of intellect, where the primary form is concerned with relations between feelings as consciously attended to at the level of imagination, and the secondary form with relations between acts of thought, e.g., generalizing logical forms from particular acts of thinking and evaluating their validity (*Ibid.*). This would seem to make apprehending relations between qualities, comparing different arrangements of qualities, and evaluating or choosing between them, and thus qualitative thinking, count as activities of the intellect rather than imagination on Collingwood's account. This alone would not make Dewey's account of inquiry, the third stage of which involves at least qualitative if not rational thinking, incompatible with Collingwood's account of artistic expression, but there *is* an apparent incompatibility when this is read together with his further claim that "[a]rt as such contains nothing that is due to intellect" and that art-making/expression is essentially "an activity by which we become conscious of our emotions" that is necessarily prior to comparing or apprehending relations between them (*Ibid.*, 292).⁴⁴

⁴⁴ In the section on art and intellect that begins with this claim (Ch. XIII, §3), Collingwood allows that art-making can involve intellectual activity insofar as an artist is "thinking in a certain way and then expressing how it feels to think in that way" (*PA*, 295), but does not consider how activities he associates with intellect, such as apprehending relations and drawing comparisons, may be involved in the process of expression itself.

This is not only a problem for my attempt to show that Collingwood's account maps onto Dewey's model of inquiry: it points to an apparent inconsistency within *The Principles of Art*. If we accept the claims (i) that apprehending relations, drawing comparisons, making assessments, etc. are activities of the intellect, and (ii) that the intellect is not essentially involved in the activity by which art comes to be made, but is at best peripheral and secondary to expression, many of Collingwood's examples of artists at work will be inconsistent or misleading. Most notable is the painter who thinks to himself "I am not satisfied with that line; let us try it this way ... and this way ... and this way ... there! that will do!" (*Ibid.*, 281); other examples include the poet "making up verses as he walk[s] suddenly finding a line in his head, and then another, and then [feels] dissatisfied with them and alter[s] them until he has got them to his liking" (*Ibid.*, 21) or the sculptor who is "playing around with clay [finding] the clay under his fingers turning into a little dancing man," and who then brings this figure to fruition (*Ibid.*, 22).

In these examples the artists are engaged in: (i) apprehending relations in and among the qualitative materials with which they are working—e.g., in the placement of various lines within the overall composition for the painter, or in the choice of words and their order for the poet—; (ii) making comparisons between these qualitative arrangements and other perceived or imagined ones—e.g., the painter, when he says "let us try it this way", imagining a new direction in which the existing visual composition can be developed which he compares with the existing composition, or the sculptor comparing the shape that the clay is taking on to a human form—; and (iii) evaluating the arrangements that are compared and choosing to realize one in preference to the others—e.g., the painter judging that certain lines will or will not 'do', or the poet judging certain word-choices to be either unsatisfactory or to his liking. These examples involve artists engaging in activities that are characteristic of qualitative thinking, at least insofar as they make their comparisons and evaluations in terms of perceived or imagined qualities and their affective responses to them, rather than on the basis of consciously-positing reasons.⁴⁵ So, for these

⁴⁵ While artists can become conscious of reasons for their choices upon further reflection, what makes this qualitative thinking and not reasoning is that the choices are not made, in the moment, *because of* reasons of which they are aware.

examples to illustrate elements of the process of artistic expression and creation, which Collingwood clearly intends for them to do, he cannot also hold that qualitative thinking is an activity of the intellect *and* that no part of art, properly speaking, is the result of the intellect.

This seeming inconsistency can be resolved by avoiding a literal and decontextualized reading of these remarks about the intellect. Specifically, we might think that Collingwood did not ultimately hold that *all* comparisons or relations were made or grasped through the intellect, or, if he did think this, that he was mistaken and that this piece of his philosophical psychology can be amended without changing the rest—and, moreover, rendering it more plausible and internally consistent. We might also read the claim that the intellect plays no role in art and expression as referring only to the secondary form of intellect— i.e., apprehending or inferring relations between acts of thought, including positing reasons for choices, actions, beliefs, etc.— but not to what he calls the primary form that involves apprehending relations between the qualitative ‘materials’ of our ‘first-order’ consciousness. We would be licensed in reading him this way given that he did not always use terms as consistently or as precisely as he might have, at times alternating between his own technical sense of a term and its more customary sense from ordinary language or philosophical tradition,⁴⁶ so it is possible that when he writes ‘intellect’ here, three chapters after making a technical distinction between primary and secondary forms of intellect, he does not mean both forms but only the form he calls secondary. I would argue that this is in fact the charitable way to read him here, since the claim that creating art does not properly involve making creative choices on the basis of reasons or inferences, while controversial, is coherent, whereas the claim that making art does not involve apprehending relations or making comparisons is simply not plausible.

Moreover, it is notable that Collingwood never explicitly lays out his full philosophical psychology but, as Louis Mink notes, continually developed it by working out the connections between various mental activities in different ways in different texts, relative to the different

⁴⁶ For example, after clarifying how he is using the terms ‘feeling’ and ‘emotion’, at times he slips into using more familiar talk of artists expressing emotions when it would be more precise to use ‘feelings’.

questions he was aiming to answer in each text (Mink 1968a, 92). As such, it is not implausible to think that his remarks on the ‘levels’ of mental activity and their relation to each other in *The Principles of Art* do not give us the complete theory of mind that he is presupposing in each of his claims about art. Although he writes here about three ‘levels’ of mind, namely, psychical feeling, imagination, and intellect, in *The New Leviathan* he divides consciousness into two ‘levels’, viz., ‘first-order’ and ‘second-order’ consciousness, where the objects of first-order consciousness are said to be grasped immediately while the objects of second-order consciousness are said to be “abstractions” or concepts that are “made by the mind out of its ... first-order objects” (NL, 7.67). Additionally, in his notes for his lectures on moral philosophy, much of which remain unpublished, he discusses *four* ‘levels’ of what he calls the practical dimension of consciousness—viz., ‘pure feeling’, appetite, desire, and will—which he takes to parallel its theoretical or cognitive dimension of consciousness, implying four levels there as well (Mink 1968a, 82-90).

Mink argues that a reconstruction of Collingwood’s full theory of mind that considers together all the discussions of consciousness in his various texts requires us to interpolate an additional level of mind or type of mental activity alongside those discussed in *The Principles of Art*, coming between imagination and intellect. Mink calls this third (of four) levels ‘perception’ and takes its functions to include rudimentary propositional thinking, posing and answering basic questions, considering and choosing between alternatives, and “the apprehension of specific objects *with awareness of their contrasts*,” (Mink 1968b, 10, my emphasis; cf. Mink 1968a, 92-95). That is, at this level we can give answers to questions, make choices, and characterize objects in propositional terms—e.g., thinking in the form ‘S is P’, whereas at the level of imagination or selective attention we can only be aware of ‘a P S’—but cannot yet give reasons for our answers or choices, or critically assess our characterizations of objects.

Whether or not Mink is right to characterize this as ‘perception’, his argument that Collingwood needs to have a further step between selective attention at the level of imagination and abstract inferential reasoning at the intellectual level does seem correct. This can be seen by

noting that a particular activity of mind counts for Collingwood as first-order or second-order consciousness, to use his terms from *The New Leviathan*, relatively rather than absolutely. So, for instance, imagination will count as second-order consciousness relative to psychical feeling, since attention ‘abstracts’ from the (relatively) immediate flux of sensations and their affective charges by selecting, i.e., by dividing up and distinguishing between portions of what, in its immediacy, is a holistic field. And the intellect is clearly a second-order form of consciousness relative to feeling and imagination, although unlike the other levels of consciousness it can take its own activities as objects of further rational reflection in what we might call a move from cognition to meta-cognition. However, the ‘objects’ that selective attention abstracts, or extracts, from the flux of psychical feeling cannot themselves be what intellectual reasoning takes as its objects, since they are not (yet) propositional in form; that is, they are still too immediate, or too close to psychical feeling. Thus, just as we needed imagination as a bridge between feeling or sensation and rational thought (cf. *PA*, 168-71), we need the mental activities that Mink classifies as perception to act as a bridge between imagination or selective attention and intellect or inferential reasoning, with these activities counting as second-order relative to imagination and first-order relative to intellect.

Whatever we call this level of mental activities, the activities that are involved in the third sense of qualitative thinking discussed above clearly belong to this level. Thus, as long as Collingwood’s claims about art-making being distinct from and prior to the operations of the intellect, and about art-making essentially involving the operations of the imagination—with a created work of art that is apprehended *qua* art being registered at the level of imagination as an organic unity, in what Collingwood calls a “total imaginative experience” (see *PA*, 144-51)—, are not taken implausibly to exclude *all* mental activities above selective attention in Collingwood’s theory of mind, there is no incompatibility between Collingwood’s theory of art and the claim that qualitative thinking is fundamental to the process of creating art, as Collingwood’s own examples presuppose. Accordingly, there is no problem with taking Collingwood’s account of artistic expression to map onto Dewey’s model of inquiry.

2.4.4 Implications of Reading Collingwood's Aesthetics in Terms of Qualitative Thinking

The pay-off of this examination of qualitative thinking goes beyond addressing an objection to attempts to read Collingwoodian expression as a form of Deweyan inquiry. For one thing, it clarifies aspects of Collingwood's philosophical psychology that are centrally relevant for his aesthetics, therewith further clarifying his views on art and expression: e.g., it helps to show that what he means by imagination, and by calling something an object of imagination, is not what Wollheim's IT reading takes him to mean. While some of the implications for his philosophical psychology go beyond the scope of this chapter to address, one such implication that is worth mentioning here, in anticipation of points I will make in Chapters 5 and 7, is that we should not take Collingwood's explicit separation of art-making from intellect to pose a problem for claims that art has cognitive value. On the contrary, it suggests that Collingwood's account can support a broader conception of what counts as 'cognitive value', and of how art can realize this value, than a narrow focus on propositional 'knowledge-that' allows.

For another thing, it clarifies what Collingwood takes art to express. If inquiry always arises within what Dewey calls a situation, and if each situation is characterized by a pervasive quality that unites what we can mark out via selective attention and reflection as its constitutive elements, with this pervasive quality governing the affordances and actions that are available in that situation,⁴⁷ then each inquiry—including processes of artistic expression—will be itself governed by a pervasive quality that partly determines the criteria for its success, in the way that Dewey writes of the solution to a particular process of inquiry being what brings coherence or harmony to the initial problematic situation. As such, what is articulated or made explicit—i.e., expressed—in a finished artwork⁴⁸ will be a pervasive quality, being both the pervasive quality of the work as an organic whole and that of the situation that included the artist's engagement with the materials of her medium. In other words, when an artist is setting out to express the felt

⁴⁷ This idea is not only Dewey's. See *NL*, 4.56, for Collingwood's own notion of an underlying quality pervading and giving unity to a perceptual field.

⁴⁸ For now I will bracket the question of when, if ever, an artwork can be said to be 'finished'.

qualities of a prior experience, what will be expressed will not be the immediate qualities of the unexpressed experience but those of the experience as mediated through the medium of expression: e.g., a scene or person *as painted*, an event *as described in poetic verse*, etc.

Reading Collingwood's account of expression alongside Dewey's ideas of inquiry and qualitative thinking shows how it is distinct from the traditional Romantic notion of expression as externalizing an inner state. For Collingwood, unlike the Romantic account, for an artwork to be an expression does not entail that the artist felt, e.g., calm or agitated before or during her art-making activities, but only that the artist attended to and brought to articulation the felt qualities of the materials and the medium in which she has worked. And this accounts for how works that might be called 'unemotional', such as Mondrian's *Tableau II* (1921-25)—a set of black lines forming a grid of rectangles and squares of yellow, red, blue, black, grey, or white—, or Kenneth Noland's *Turnsole* (1961)—a bull's-eye-like series of four concentric rings of light blue, yellow, black, and light blue expanding from a darker blue dot in the centre of the canvas—, can count as expressions: they can articulate or clarify the felt, qualitative dimension of the relations between elements of the medium, or of the artist's working with them (e.g., expressing what it is like to apply paint to a surface, move one's body, etc., in a certain way).

This is not to say that a particular process of expression cannot start with the artist having an experience whose felt dimensions she wants to clarify, but that *what* is expressed or clarified through the process of painting, writing, dancing, etc., will not be this feeling as it was prior to its expression but rather the dynamically developing quality of the whole process that includes both the initiating felt experience and the artist's experience engaging with her medium. For example, a painting of a landscape, such as one of Cezanne's paintings of Mount Sainte-Victoire, does not express the feeling the painter got from simply looking at that scene, but the felt dimensions of the experience of looking at it to paint it—or, perhaps, of painting it as a way of looking at it. Likewise, the feeling a poem expresses is not simply an emotional state that the poet felt prior to writing it, but includes the felt dimensions of the poet's effort to put that emotional state into words: e.g., the felt qualities of certain words or phrases, metrical schemes,

punctuation and line breaks, etc., and how these qualities cohere, both with one another and with the emotional state or mood that initiated the expressive activity.

Thirdly, reading Collingwood's account of art and expression in connection with Dewey's notion of qualitative thought allows us to specify more precisely what is distinctive about art and artistic creation. While the third sense of qualitative thought, which Dewey calls thinking directly in and with qualities, is not exclusive to artistic or expressive activities—as seen from my example above of the motorist closely attending to the feel of the road while driving in dangerous conditions—, what I would argue is plausibly distinct about artistic activities is that they involve all three senses of qualitative thought that Dewey distinguishes. That is, the thinking that is done with the qualitative elements of the artistic medium—e.g., a painter's thinking with colours and shapes and visible textures, a poet's thinking with the qualitative aspects of language over and above its semiotic aspects, a musician's thinking in tones, harmonies, sound-structures, etc.—is also thinking *about* qualities, whether the felt qualities of the artist's engagement with her medium or those of an additional experience, insofar as the artistic process articulates these qualities, making their felt character available for conscious apprehension and reflection at what Collingwood would call the level of intellectual understanding.⁴⁹ Moreover, insofar as this activity of thinking *about* qualities by thinking *with* qualities is itself governed by a pervasive quality running through and giving coherence to the particular qualities (or 'qualia') in and with which the artist works, and insofar as what a finished artwork expresses will be this pervasive quality, it will count as qualitative thought in the second of Dewey's senses.

Drawing out these aspects of Collingwood's account not only clarifies them but also makes his identification of art with the expression of feeling more plausible. If what he means is *not* that in order to count as 'art proper' a work must externalize an inner state of its creator which it transmits to the work's audience—which is the traditional Romantic notion of expression—but that what he calls art proper (i) must be the result of a process of inquiry into the qualitative dimension of some experience—i.e., what it is like to have, or undergo, or participate in that

⁴⁹ See *PA*, 167, for Collingwood's distinction between reason and understanding as activities of the intellect.

experience—and (ii) must make this qualitative character manifest for our awareness at the level of thought or understanding and not merely evoke it at the level of feeling, then his theory can avoid the problem of excluding many works that, intuitively or in accordance with accepted artistic practices, we might want to count as art, while still allowing us to distinguish between art and non-art or mere craft. It also gives us a way of making sense of talk of artworks ‘embodying’ the feelings they express. If ‘expressing a feeling’ means articulating the qualitative dimension of an experience—and *not* that the feeling, as a mental state, is somehow contained in a physical object—, and if this articulation is done through the selection, manipulation, and organization of the materials of the artist’s medium according to their felt qualities so that an underlying and unifying quality emerges and is foregrounded for conscious awareness, then the artwork that is the result of this process will itself be comprised by the materials that manifest this quality when apprehended together in a total imaginative experience of the work.⁵⁰

2.5 Conclusion: Furthering the Non-Idealist Reading of Collingwood’s Aesthetics

In the sections above I outlined the debate over whether Collingwood holds an idealist theory of art (IT) and argued that his accounts of expression and artistic creation are not only compatible with, but are instances of, what Dewey calls inquiry and qualitative thinking. It remains to show how the compatibility of these ideas supports a non-idealist reading of Collingwood’s aesthetics. In this final section, I argue that it does so largely by highlighting and clarifying the necessary role of the medium in Collingwood’s account of expression, and by showing that his account can accommodate what is commonly called ‘artistic technique’ as it features in the education and

⁵⁰ The ‘materials’ of the medium need not be physical or perceptible but will include whatever features of the ‘situation’ (in Dewey’s sense) of the artist’s making of the work would count as artistically relevant for the proper appreciation of that work. This allows Collingwood’s theory to account for a greater range of artistically relevant features than those that are perceptible. For instance, the fact that a work was made by a particular artist, in the context of that artist’s body of work as well as in the context of a certain artistic tradition or practice, will count as features of the situation of the work’s making if seeing the work in terms of its place in these contexts is involved in properly appreciating what the artist has done. Seeing, e.g., *Voice of Fire* (1967) as having been made by Barnett Newman at a certain point in his development as a painter and in the context of late modern art would be part of a proper appreciation of the painting *qua* artwork. The qualitative element of these features of the work consist in *what it was like* for Newman to have painted the canvas in this context, as distinct from what it would have been like for him to have done this, say, at the beginning of his career, and in *what it is like* for a viewer to see the painting *as* a product of this context rather than another.

practices of artists while remaining consistent with his claim that art-making, *qua* expression, is “an activity of which there can be no technique” (*PA*, 111). I also address a potential worry about the circularity of my appeal to the compatibility of Collingwood’s and Dewey’s ideas as a way of showing that Collingwood’s thinking is not idealist but is more like Dewey’s organic or holistic ‘interactionism’.

2.5.1 The Place of Medium and Technique in Collingwood’s Aesthetics

If one reads *The Principle’s of Art* already thinking of Collingwood as an idealist (as many early reviewers likely did; see fn.1 above), or accepting the characterization of IT as the ‘Croce-Collingwood’ theory and the Wollheimian critique thereof (as many analytic philosophers of art currently seem to do), it is easy to misconstrue the point of Collingwood’s examples of artists’ engagement with their mediums and to overlook the places where he makes it clear that, for him, all expression is necessarily mediated. For instance, he writes that the kind of expression that characterizes artistic creation “must be formally or linguistically expressed, not only materially or psychically expressed,” (*Ibid.*, 234), where material or psychic expression here is what he calls the ‘betrayal’ of an emotion (*Ibid.*, 122-23). While it might not be immediately obvious how this entails that he takes artistic expression necessarily to require a medium, it becomes clear when what he here calls formal or linguistic expression is understood in the context of the theory of language that he sketches in Book II, within which this claim is made.

It is beyond this chapter to fully recount this theory, but it is enough for my purposes to note that Collingwood uses ‘language’ in a very broad sense to include anything we might call a significant gesture, i.e., anything done intentionally to communicate meaning, or to give a determinate form to our awareness of what we experience at what he calls the psychical level, and not only to refer to verbal discourse.⁵¹ He takes language in its most fundamental sense to be a matter of bodily gesture (*Ibid.*, 243, 246-47) and writes that gesture, or significant intentional

⁵¹See *PA*, 225-27, for Collingwood’s distinction between ‘symbolism’, which includes verbal discourse, and ‘language proper’, where ‘proper’ here means ‘more fundamental’, i.e., that which underlies symbolic or verbal language.

movement, involves “our motor activities, raised from the psychical level to the conscious level” (*Ibid.*, 247), by which he means the deliberate exercise of these motor activities in which we are ‘mentally present’, or what we might colloquially call movement ‘with thought behind it’ rather than merely automatic movement, e.g., a wink rather than a mere blink. It follows that if artistic expression must involve ‘linguistic’ expression, it must, at some level, be done through deliberately made gestures and must not merely be an overflow or outpouring of what is felt inwardly: hence, artistic expression must be mediated by some form of ‘language’ in this broad sense. Likewise, the ‘formal’ part of the phrase “formally or linguistically expressed” suggests that this kind of conscious expression, as distinct from the mere betrayal of emotion, must involve giving the emotion a form through which it can be apprehended as a particular determinate feeling, where this entails a medium in which it is given form.

Ridley notes in his argument for the non-idealist reading that expression is necessarily mediated in Collingwood’s account. As he argues, for Collingwood,

[o]ne may express one’s experience in words or in gestures; one may express it in paint, sounds or stone. But one must always express it in *something*. So the act of expression is tied indissolubly to the medium through which it is achieved [and so] if art just *is* the expression of emotion, and if expression is necessarily mediated, art too is necessarily mediated. [...] Therefore works of art exist, not in the head, but in the publicly accessible media of their embodiment. (Ridley 1999, 27)

While this is mostly right, Ridley’s move from pointing out the need for a work of art to be in a medium to his claim that artworks necessarily exist as embodied in a publicly accessible form is too hasty, since Collingwood does allow that at least some artworks can exist ‘in the head’ of the artist without being externalized. This is where the compatibility with Dewey’s model of inquiry can help. If ‘embodied’ is understood in the sense in which Dewey uses this term when outlining the third stage of inquiry, in which the elements of the problematic situation and the possible actions that are hypothesized as solutions are said to be ‘embodied in symbols’ that are then reasoned about in ‘dramatic rehearsal’, where embodying them in symbols can be a matter of writing or drawing them or, crucially, of imagining them in a quasi-perceptual form (*LTI*, 114;

cf. Dewey 1922, 132), then we can read Ridley's claim as fully consistent with Collingwood. Moreover, the point about something that is embodied in *this* sense—i.e., not necessarily physically, but possibly imagined in quasi-perceptual form—being publicly accessible is important for understanding how Collingwood's account is not IT. Even when imagined 'in the head', the medium in which a work is realized—i.e., in which a felt quality is expressed or given form—is never 'private' to the artist but, as quasi-perceptual or imagined as embodied, it is in principle able to be externalized in a perceptible form accessible to others.⁵² As Collingwood notes, "every imaginative experience is a sensuous experience together with consciousness of the same" (*PA*, 306), and so what is imagined is always imagined as seen, heard, felt, etc. in ways that others could, in principle, see, hear, or feel it: e.g., writing a poem or composing a tune 'in one's head' will involve imagining reading or hearing or speaking the words, or hearing the notes, that anyone who apprehended the poem or tune would also see or hear.⁵³

We might think that only simple artworks could be created in an imagined rather than a physical medium, even for an artist with a rich and veridical imagination—i.e., one who is able to imagine complex quasi-perceptual forms, and to imagine them accurately as they would be perceived if one were to encounter them in material form—, and that only artworks in certain mediums could so be created, e.g., poems, very short stories, snatches of melody or simple tunes, etc.⁵⁴ Collingwood himself agrees that, all else being equal, works that are created through imaginary engagement with a medium 'in the head', rather than through engagement with an external medium, will be limited in complexity and so are not likely to be as rich or rewarding artistically. In the section titled "The Bodily 'Work of Art'" he considers the difference between the experience a painter has, and expresses, when painting a subject and "a man who looks at the

⁵² We can compare this with Wittgenstein's private language argument (see Wittgenstein 1953, §§243-48, 269-75). Note that the impossibility of a language that can be understood by only one person does not preclude people from having 'private' thoughts in a shared language that they never communicate to others; cf. Turk Saunders & Henze, 1967, 5-6.

⁵³ Cf. Dewey's claim in *AE*, 53: "Even the composition conceived *in the head* and, therefore, physically private, is public in its significant content, since it is conceived with reference to execution in a product that is perceptible and hence belongs to the common world" (my emphasis).

⁵⁴ It is notable that the artworks that are most plausibly able to be created 'in the head' are those that can be expressed aurally, i.e., in sound or in speech, where this could be explained by the differences between how we register the world through vision and how we register it through hearing. Unfortunately I do not have space to explore this idea further.

subject without painting” (*Ibid.*, 307). He allows that the non-painter may have “an aesthetic experience”, i.e., the non-painter may express to himself what he sees, apprehending and articulating the qualitative dimension of his visual experience of the subject through a mediating activity of the imagination alone, or ‘in his head’. However, he contends that “there is far less in that experience than in the experience of a man who has painted the subject; for the sensuous elements involved in merely looking, even when looking is accompanied by a smile of pleasure, gestures, and so forth, are necessarily much scantier and poorer, *and also much less highly organized in their totality*, than the sensuous elements involved in painting” (*Ibid.*, 307-08, my emphasis), where the ‘sensuous elements’ here are what Dewey refers to as qualities. This is because what the painter expresses is not only a visual experience of the subject but what Collingwood calls the whole “psycho-physical activity of painting; his visual sensation of the colours and shapes of his subject, his felt gestures as he manipulates his brush, the seen shapes of paint patches that these gestures leave on his canvass: in short, the total sensuous (or rather, sensuous-emotional) experience of a man at work before his easel” (*Ibid.*, 307).

This example is important for at least two reasons. First, it shows that Collingwood takes the medium to be essential both to the process of creating art, or *expressing*, and to what a particular artwork is as an *expression*, with what he calls the psycho-physical activity of painting being “an essential part of what [a painter] ‘externalizes’ or ‘records’ in his picture” (*Ibid.*, 308). That is, what a given work expresses, and so what characterizes or individuates it for Collingwood as art, will be the artist’s working out of what she feels in her chosen medium: e.g., the experience of seeing something and painting it, or, we might say, of painting it in order to see it more perspicuously. It follows that when an artwork is created in a medium that is material or physical, e.g., a painting or sculpture, the materiality of the medium will be an essential part of the work itself *qua* expression, contra IT.

Second, the example implies that an artist’s medium and its components can function as prostheses that extend the artist’s capacities for gesturing, with the artist being present in her medium in her engagement with it in the way that someone moving is present in their body, as

well as the artist's abilities to engage consciously or imaginatively with the world. This is where artistic technique, or an acquired familiarity with the medium and a set of habits of acting in and with the medium, has a place within Collingwood's account. While there may be no technique of expression *per se*, it does not preclude the use of techniques of working with the medium in which expression occurs: the greater the artist's level of skill in working with her medium, the more affordances for expression this will give her.⁵⁵

While Collingwood does not make these last points explicit when discussing his painter example and the 'bodily' work of art, reading him in light of the compatibility with Dewey's accounts of inquiry and qualitative thinking helps to bring them out and shows them to be implicit in what he writes. One could raise a worry here about my looking to ideas from Dewey to help us understand Collingwood's account in line with the non-idealist reading. Before concluding, I address this worry by saying more about the grounds for taking their accounts to be compatible in the ways my argument requires.

2.5.2 The (Non-Idealist) Metaphysical Underpinnings of Collingwood's Aesthetics

The potential worry about my approach is that my claim that Collingwood's account of artistic expression and Dewey's account of inquiry are compatible, and my appeal to it to argue against the IT interpretation of the former, risks being circular. That is, because my reading of these accounts as compatible depends on taking Collingwood to share a similar metaphysics of experience and mind to Dewey's, which I have called 'interactionism', it assumes that Collingwood's account is *not* grounded in an idealist metaphysical position—but this is what is in question in the debate over IT. This worry is best addressed by pointing out that my argument does not depend on this compatibility to prove that Collingwood was not himself an idealist (in which case it would be circular) but appeals to it to show how Collingwood's statements about art can be read as giving a consistent description of the artist's process of expressing a feeling,

⁵⁵ Cf. *PA*, 27: "...the skill here displayed [i.e., by a writer like Pope or a sculptor like Michelangelo], though a necessary condition of the best art, is not by itself sufficient to produce it."

and of the artwork that is created as a result of this process, that is distinctly not IT, especially in the necessary place it gives to the medium. Another way to respond is to note that there are grounds for taking Collingwood to hold a metaphysics of experience similar to Dewey's interactionism, independently of the compatibilities of their accounts of expression and inquiry.

In section 2.2.4 I briefly noted that the unpublished manuscript *Libellus de Generatione* shows that Collingwood rejected both realism and idealism as metaphysical positions and instead was working out a radically processual metaphysics of 'becoming'. While this is evidence that Collingwood is not, *pace* Ridley, a metaphysical idealist in general, it does not on its own show that Collingwood's account of art is not IT—since someone who is not themselves an idealist could nevertheless propose IT without realizing its idealist implications—nor does it show that Collingwood's metaphysical position is like Dewey's. Although there are aspects of the position worked out in the *Libellus* manuscript that could be paralleled with Dewey's metaphysics, such as Collingwood's rejection of the Cartesian subject-object dichotomy,⁵⁶ its unpublished status makes it hard to cite it as evidence. Fortunately, this can be shown by citing *Speculum Mentis* (1924; hereafter *SM*), which, ironically, is Collingwood's most idealist-seeming work given its Hegelian structure and talk of 'the absolute'.

There, he writes that metaphysical idealism, or "the explanation of the entire universe in terms of mind," is subject to the same problem he finds in materialism: both "begin by abstracting the object of knowledge from the subject, and ... inquir[e] into the nature of the object in this abstraction, regarded as a thing in itself" (*SM*, 266). He takes both to commit what he calls "the fundamental error of separating the metaphysical inquiry as to what the world is in itself from the psychological inquiry as to how we come to know it" (*Ibid.*). This shows that, like Dewey, he is against attempts to understand either the subject or the object of an experience in isolation from the other, or treating the things that we know as objects apart from our relation to them as knowers; it also shows that he does not accept a reduction of these objects to solely

⁵⁶ For example, Collingwood writes: "Nor do I admit any dualism between mind and its object such that while mind is wholly process its object can be conceived as a static whole outside it. The object is process too, *and these are not two processes but one process*" (Collingwood 1920, 2, my emphasis).

mental entities, i.e., to an existence solely ‘within’ mind, just as he rejects the move to locate the reality of things in their existence wholly ‘outside’ of our awareness and experience of them.

Additional similarities to Dewey’s views can be found further on in the book. In one passage, he argues that our experiencing or knowing of objects is “organic to” what these objects are, with ourselves and the objects we experience being “members of one whole” (*Ibid.*, 311). In another passage, he writes that we can only know ourselves, i.e., our minds, “through the mediation of an external world” (*Ibid.*, 315), where ‘external’ means just what is not ourselves rather than what lies beyond our experience,⁵⁷ and in a third he writes that “the life of the mind consists in raising and solving problems” (*Ibid.*, 317). While this last passage resonates most with Dewey’s idea of inquiry as fundamental to all forms of thought, the earlier two suggest a compatibility between Collingwood’s views and Dewey’s with regard to subjects and objects being abstractions from a primordial whole, whether this is called ‘experience’ or a ‘situation’—which are more or less equivalent terms for Dewey—, and with regard to our engagement in and with the world being the medium for our awareness and knowledge.

Although this does not show that there are explicit parallels in Collingwood’s thought for every aspect of the ‘interactionist’ metaphysics underlying Dewey’s philosophy, it at least shows that Collingwood’s thinking is similar enough to Dewey’s on these matters for them to be compatible in the ways and to the extent that my argument requires. This suggests that Collingwood’s account of art should be read in the context of this process-oriented, holistic, and organicist metaphysical framework, where this gives us a way of understanding what he means by his most idealist-sounding remarks in *The Principles of Art* that is not IT. Since Collingwood does not conceive of consciousness as an entity that is aware, but rather as awareness itself, and since he does not conceive of mind as a substance or thing but as a “complex of activities” (Collingwood 1946, 288; cf. *NL*, 1.61-1.84, 9.17), when he uses terms such as ‘idea’, ‘feeling’, ‘impression’, ‘emotion’, or the like he should not be read as referring to mental objects in the sense of things than can be located within the mind like items in a container, but instead as

⁵⁷ Cf. *PA*, 166, where Collingwood argues that there is no sense in positing the world as either ‘external’ or ‘internal’ to us.

referring to processes or mental activities that we engage in.⁵⁸ Similarly, when he refers to something as existing in someone's head, he should not be taken to be claiming that it is such a mental object housed within a mind, but instead to be indicating that it exists within someone's experience—and when he says that something exists *only* or *solely* 'in the head' or as imagined, he should be understood to mean that it does not exist apart from anyone's experience or consciousness of it—where experience should not be understood as something 'subjective' but as an interaction between the subject and its world from which the thing in question emerges.

Since IT treats the mind and the imagination as things or spaces in which mental objects can exist, and takes artworks to be mental objects that exist in these spaces, and since these are incompatible with how Collingwood conceives of mind and mental activities, Collingwood cannot hold IT. Thus, his remarks in *The Principles of Art* cannot plausibly be taken to mean what someone who did hold IT would mean by saying or writing the same words.

2.5.3 Summary

In this chapter I have presented a way of understanding Collingwood's theory of art as *not* being the ideal theory that it is commonly taken to be, where this understanding lets us account for his more idealist-seeming statements and shows how they fit with his remarks and examples that are inconsistent with IT. This understanding draws on the compatibility of Collingwood's account of expression and Dewey's model of inquiry, as well as the compatibility of Dewey's idea of qualitative thinking with Collingwood's philosophical psychology and his views on the relations between feeling, imagination, and thought; I have argued for both compatibilities as part of my main argument against the IT reading of Collingwood's aesthetics. While it would be possible to argue that Collingwood does not take artworks to be mental objects, and so does not hold IT, without bringing in Dewey, it would not have allowed me to explain as effectively what Collingwood *does* take artworks to be: viz., mediated and embodied articulations of the

⁵⁸ They can, of course, be the intentional objects of other mental activities, but this treats them as 'objects' in a *functional*, and not necessarily an *ontological*, sense.

qualitative dimension of an experience where the quality or qualities that a work articulates, or expresses, can emerge from and are developed within the course of the artist's engagement with the medium in which they are expressed. Moreover, while my reading of Collingwood is in line with Ridley's interpretation, insofar as it takes references to artworks as existing only 'in the head' to be Collingwood's way of saying that making artworks and apprehending something as the work of art that it is are necessarily mind-involving processes—and not that they are purely mental entities—, looking beyond Collingwood to Dewey and the compatibilities in their thinking allows me to take up and extend Ridley's defence of this interpretation so as to better address or avoid the objections that Ridley faced.

While several of my points suggest the plausibility of this account or its explanatory value for artistic practices, my primary aim here has been to argue for this understanding of Collingwood's account of art over IT, rather than to argue directly for the correctness of the account. Defending Collingwood's account of art, reconstructed and understood in this way, is material for future work, as is exploring the further implications raised by my argument for the compatibility of Collingwood's and Dewey's thinking for both of their aesthetics: e.g., exploring the similarities between their notions of expression and its place in art, or showing a stronger connection between Dewey's theory of inquiry and his own aesthetics than has been generally recognized, or highlighting the ways that Dewey also distinguishes art from what Collingwood would call 'mere craft'.

3. BERGSON'S IMPLICIT AESTHETICS: *CREATIVE EVOLUTION* AND ARTISTIC CREATION

3.1 Introduction

Notable in Henri Bergson's *Creative Evolution* (1907; hereafter *CE*) are the examples of artists and their processes and of artworks and their creation, which are used by analogy to illustrate Bergson's views on the distinction between living organisms and matter, the nature of time as duration, the nature of biological creation, and the mode of consciousness he calls 'intuition'. Although some attention has been paid to Bergson's influence on artists,¹ comparatively little has been given to the understanding of art that can be found in Bergson's philosophy,² with the two authors who have attended to this—viz., Ruth Lorand in "Bergson's Concept of Art" (1999) and Ryu Murakami in "Transmission of Creativity" (2009)—drawing less on *Creative Evolution* than on Bergson's other works and so not discussing the aforementioned analogies in any depth, if at all. In this chapter I examine the connections between life and art that are implicit in these analogies in order to explore how Bergson's theory of life and evolution might account for art and its creation. Whether Bergson's account of life and evolution is correct in its own right—which is a question for the philosophy of biology—the understanding of art that emerges can still offer a robust alternative to other theories of art, especially those involving something akin to the kind of mechanistic thinking to which Bergson was opposed in the biological theories of his day.

¹ See, for example, Hamilton 1956, Sears 1975, Antliff 1993, Antliff 1999, Gillies 1996, Luisetti 2008, and many of the essays collected in Ó Maoilearca and De Mille (eds.), 2015.

² The exception is the attention paid to Bergson's *Laughter* (1900) by philosophers writing on comedy—e.g., Hanna 1968, Armstrong 1985, Clark 1987, Kivy 2003, and Morreall 2014—but even here the focus has been on Bergson's thoughts on the comic and not his views on the nature of art in general.

In Section 3.2 I give an overview of Bergson's account of life since, while a full explication of his theory is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is necessary to cover its essential elements to go on, in Section 3.3, to examine his analogies between art and life and to consider their implications for an understanding of art and artistic creation. Once the view of art that is implicit in these analogies is brought out, in Section 3.4 I consider how this view relates to Lorand's and Murakami's interpretations of Bergson's aesthetic thought, and, since I am primarily considering the implications of *Creative Evolution* for an understanding of art, I briefly discuss how the view of art I find implicit in this book relates to what Bergson says about art in other sources, such as his essay "The Perception of Change" (1934c) and in his last major book *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1932; hereafter *TSMR*).

3.2 Bergson's Account of Life as Creation

Bergson's aim in *Creative Evolution* is to present an account of life and its development that corrects what he sees as the mistakes of the leading evolutionary theories of his day. While agreeing with Lamarckians that evolutionary developments must be understood in terms of order or purposiveness, against the Darwinian position that variations in organisms are accidental (*CE*, 85-86), he disagrees that they arise from habits formed by the activity and experience of the parent being passed on to the offspring (*Ibid.*, 83). That developments in organisms are not accidental but purposive in some sense, without the purposes being those of individual organisms, implies a supra-individual purposiveness 'behind' these developments, as it were. Positing such an overarching purposiveness to life's development, however, risks falling into one of the two ways of thinking about life that Bergson insists are also mistaken: i.e., 'radical finalism', with 'mechanism' being the other mistaken view.

Since his own position ends up being a kind of modified finalism, it is natural that Bergson is more critical of the mechanistic conception of life. "The essence of mechanical explanation," he writes, "is to regard the future and the past as calculable functions of the present" (*Ibid.*, 37); e.g., a mechanistic explanation of the development of an organism might account for the way its

form is adapted to its environment in terms of the physical and chemical conditions in this environment, seeing these as having acted on the organism to cause it to develop the form it has in a way that, in principle, could have been predicted. While this approach may fit when applied to inert matter within a closed system involving a finite number of states, and with change being conceived as a succession of different arrangements of these states, Bergson argues that it is inappropriate to apply this to living beings who do not exist within such a closed system but are necessarily related to other living beings from whom they are never entirely independent (*Ibid.*, 42) and for whom change is not merely a succession of ‘states’ but involves duration, being a continuous process of internal development (*Ibid.*, 1-4).³

Just as he writes in *Time and Free Will* (1889; hereafter *TFW*) of the mistake made by those who attempt to account for phenomena of consciousness by “setting psychic states side by side [and] forming a chain or a line of them” (*TFW*, 103), and thereby misapplying spatial concepts to something that is not spatial, attempts to understand the evolution of life through spatial concepts will also be mistaken since evolution, *qua* change, is essentially temporal. For real change to be possible, that which changes must in some way endure through the change, becoming or growing into, rather than being succeeded by, something new. Since mechanism deals with static states in juxtaposition rather than with fluid processes of development over time, it entails the denial of duration and of any genuine change in the world.

Since, Bergson insists, duration is a basic fact of our experience of reality, and since the idea of change as growth within duration is inherent to the concept of evolution, mechanism is doubly unsuited to understanding either the evolution of particular life forms or the phenomenon of evolution as a whole. By positing the past and future as being calculable from the present—where the present is conceived as a static moment or ‘time slice’ abstracted from duration—, mechanism entails “that *all is given*” (*CE*, 37, original emphasis) such that the entire past and future, and thus the whole of time, could in principle be known in a single moment by a mind

³ For more on the idea of duration as a process of change *within* a ‘state’, rather than a succession of separate states, see *TFW*, 100-104, especially the example of a finger moving along a line; see also *The Creative Mind* 1934 (hereafter *CM*), 136-39, and Deleuze 1966, 37-38.

that was able to make the necessary calculations. However, if all can be known in advance, the future would contain nothing genuinely new,⁴ with our experiences of change and novelty being illusions arising from our limited knowledge of what is ‘given’. While radical finalism, being a teleological view on which an organism’s development occurs for the sake of realizing a goal, might seem opposed to mechanism,⁵ Bergson argues that it shares mechanism’s central problem in that it “implies that things and beings merely realize a programme previously arranged” (*Ibid.*, 39) and so also presupposes that all is given in advance. “But,” he writes, “if there is nothing unforeseen, no invention or creation in the universe, time is useless again” (*Ibid.*).

3.2.1 Duration, Organization, and the Élan Vital

As noted, Bergson’s own position is a modified finalism since it views the development of variations in organisms not as accidental but rather as coordinated or *organized*, taking this view to be necessary to account both for the empirical fact of the harmonious development of different species in ways that mutually support each other. This view is likewise necessary, Bergson argues, to account for the way in which organic forms and structures in living beings—e.g., sensory organs—have developed holistically, where any change to one part of such a structure, or to the order in which the parts developed, would have made the other parts useless, with it being improbable that all these parts would have initially arisen together as a matter of chance (*Ibid.*, 64). Thus, Bergson posits an organizing principle, a ‘vital impetus’ (*élan vital*) common to all forms of life. To escape the problems of radical finalism he locates this as an initial impetus driving life to expand and grow, rather than a final cause or a specific pre-determined goal towards which it is growing, which allows the direction that life will take to remain open.

In contrast to mechanism, which conceives of living organisms in external, spatial terms, Bergson’s account of life views living beings from the perspective of duration and so conceives of organisms from the inside, as dynamic processes rather than objects that can be frozen or

⁴ See *CE*, 4, 9, and 341 for Bergson’s comparisons of this idea to a register into which the past has been inscribed, a fan being unfurled, and a painted canvas being unrolled.

⁵ Cf. *CE*, 40: “one accepts something of it [i.e., finalism] as soon as one rejects pure mechanism.”

abstracted from the flux of lived time: in other words, Bergson shifts the focus from ‘being’ to ‘becoming’. It is more natural for us, he explains, to think in terms of “things and states rather than changes and acts. But things and states are only views, taken by our mind, of becoming. There are no things, there are only actions” (*Ibid.*, 248). Evolution is the continual development or unfolding of these processes and so implies “a real persistence of the past in the present, a duration which is, as it were, a hyphen, a connecting link”, with the temporal continuity of this development being part of “the very essence of life” (*Ibid.*, 22).

For Bergson, the concept of life extends both to individual life forms, or organisms—e.g., particular species and their members—, and to life in general, i.e., the *élan vital* or common animating force working in and through particular life forms, with life in both senses being distinct from inert matter. The first distinction to be made here is between organized and unorganized bodies: although living bodies are material, “portion[s] of extension bound up with the rest of extension ... subject to the same physical and chemical laws that govern any and every portion of matter” (*Ibid.*, 12), they are “separated and closed off by nature herself” (*Ibid.*), whereas inanimate bodies are marked out by our perception according to “lines along which *action* might be taken” (*Ibid.*, original emphasis). While the organization of a living body, with the “systematization of [its] parts” (*Ibid.*, 14), is intrinsic, the systematization or coordination of parts that can be found in some inanimate objects is extrinsic, being relative to perceived possibilities of our acting on them, or “the designs of a certain kind of *influence* that we might exert on a certain part of space” (*Ibid.*, 11, original emphasis).⁶

In regard to the second sense of life, i.e., life in general, Bergson insists that it is not “an abstraction ... a mere heading under which all living beings are inscribed” (*Ibid.*, 26), but a real force running through matter, “traversing the bodies it has organized ... passing from generation to generation ... divided amongst species and distributed amongst individuals” (*Ibid.*).⁷ This

⁶ This suggests that ‘unorganized’ means ‘not *intrinsically* organized’ rather than ‘without organization’; cf. *CE*, 222, 274-75 for Bergson’s critique of the notion of disorder.

⁷ Cf. *CE*, 128: “The living being is above all a thoroughfare ... the essence of life is in the movement by which life is transmitted,” which suggests that, although life *qua* vital impetus can’t exist apart from living beings, it is primary.

force, continuous with the initial impetus, is essentially a tendency to act on and organize matter by diversification from within rather than through the assembly of parts from without, being the cause of the variations in organisms that have led to the emergence of new species (*Ibid.*, 96, 87). Together, these tendencies to organize and diversify amount to an overarching tendency to create new forms, which is why Bergson asserts that life “is invention, is unceasing creation” (*Ibid.*, 23),⁸ and is why he connects life and duration, which he has established as “mean[ing] invention, the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolutely new” (*Ibid.*, 11).

Life can only act on matter through the living bodies it animates and has already organized, which give it a ‘foothold’ in matter, so to speak, with life needing to adopt matter in order to adapt it.⁹ These life forms can be seen as actualizations of various tendencies of the *élan vital*, with their actions being driven by the impetus towards creation and diversification: for instance, the more active or ‘animated’ an organism is, the less repetitive or ‘mechanical’ its actions will be. Notably for the implications of these views for aesthetics, the organization of matter that life effects is a different kind of making from what Bergson calls manufacture or fabrication, by which he means the external assembly of discrete parts going “from the many to the one” (*Ibid.*, 92), with the resulting object containing no more than what went into its assembly. Vital organization, on the other hand, creates by “work[ing] from the centre to the periphery” (*Ibid.*), being an out-growing or emergence of a new form from within an existing one via dissociation, making multiple what was previously a unity, with each body that is so organized being more than merely the sum of its material ‘parts’. This idea of life as a continuous process of growth—not just in the sense that it is ongoing, but that what grows is continuous with that from which it is growing—can be seen in Bergson’s comparison of the *élan* to an exploded shell where each fragment bursts into further fragments (*Ibid.*, 98).

Even with the distinction between organization and manufacture, the latter is still a way that life’s tendency to act on matter and create new forms is actualized. To keep an organism’s

⁸ See also *CE*, 29, 86, 101, 162, 223, and 230 for his remarks on life as creation.

⁹ Cf. *CE* 71: “Where [life] has to direct a movement, it begins by adopting it. Life proceeds by insinuation.”

(re)arranging of inert matter distinct from life's organizing of living bodies, the former can be called 'ordering' as opposed to 'organization'. The ordering of matter, while not creating new *material* forms, nevertheless does create something in the form of new possibilities for action: for example, the ordering of pieces of wood in the fabrication of a raft makes possible different actions than does the ordering of the same pieces in the fabrication of a fence. While matter is always arranged in some way, and so always has an order, matter that we have deliberately ordered belongs to what Bergson calls the *vital* or *willed order*, in contrast to the *inert* or *automatic order* of matter (*Ibid.*, 224). The latter involves the purely spatial arrangement into which matter 'falls' as a result of mechanistic physical forces, whereas the former involves a purposive arrangement of matter for the sake of some end. Bergson gives an example of a room where the position of the objects can either be due to physical forces—e.g., gravity—or a person's automatic movements—e.g., those made while asleep—on the one hand, or to their deliberate actions—e.g., decorating or tidying—on the other, with the former exhibiting an automatic order and the latter bringing about a willed order of the sort "that a methodical person consciously puts into his life" (*Ibid.*, 232).

This distinction between the willed and automatic kinds of order points to a key difference between organisms and vital forces on one hand and inert matter and the forces of physics on the other: the movements and arrangements of the latter occur deterministically and of necessity, with the specific effects of a physical force acting on a certain part of matter being repeatable and so generalizable and predictable, whereas the activities of the former are indeterminate and contingent, being unforeseeable until they occur. To emphasize the indeterminacy of vital activity and ordering against the determinism of physics, Bergson writes that life's tendency to act on matter involves "an effort to engraft on to the necessity of physical forces the largest possible amount of *indetermination*" (*Ibid.*, 114, original emphasis; cf. 251).

This understanding of vital activity and organic creation as introducing indetermination into, and thereby 'holding open', a universe that would otherwise be wholly deterministic or closed is related to Bergson's position that the difference between life and matter is ultimately not one

between temporality and spatiality but is between two temporalities. Since both are aspects of the universe as a whole, and since the universe endures, matter as well as life is part of duration. Their difference is due to a difference in the movements of each within the unfolding of universal duration, with the movement of life described as an “ascent”, an “upspringing”, a “shooting out”, and that of matter as the inverse, a “descent” towards the repetition of existing forms rather than the creation of new ones (*Ibid.*, 11, 164, 248-49). By the ascending motion of creation, then, life works against matter’s tendency to settle into repetition and stasis, thereby “expanding the present” by continually transcending any ‘status quo’ (*Ibid.*, 52).

3.2.2 Life and Consciousness: Instinct, Intelligence, and Intuition

The last aspect of Bergson’s account of life remaining to be noted, which will be relevant for understanding the full implications of his analogies between art and organic creation, involves life’s need for consciousness.¹⁰ In order for living organisms to continue the ascending motion of the *élan*, their actions in and on matter must be free, i.e., not fully determined by physical laws, and for this they require some degree of awareness of their environment and of multiple possible actions they might take in a situation. This awareness also makes it possible for an organism *not* to act immediately in response to a stimulus by introducing a moment of hesitation between the stimulus and the organism’s response, where delaying the precise moment of action also involves a degree of indeterminacy. This can exist at a low level, such as when a worm changes course to avoid an obstacle, and need not involve self-consciousness or active deliberation, which is a feature of more complex life forms: “[t]he more the nervous system develops, the more numerous and more precise become the movements among which [the organism] can choose; the clearer, also, is the consciousness that accompanies them” (*Ibid.*, 110).

The two principle forms of consciousness that have been actualized in the course of evolution on the divergent lines of invertebrates and vertebrates—reaching their fullest

¹⁰ For Bergson, ‘consciousness’ consists in being conscious, i.e., aware, *of* something, and so should be understood as an activity or event rather than an entity or faculty (i.e., ‘*a* consciousness’).

development in social insects such as ants and bees, and in humans, respectively—are instinct and intelligence. Each of these forms involves a characteristic tendency to act on, and with, matter. Instinct involves acting directly on both inert and organic matter, with an organism’s body being used to affect its object by ‘fitting’ to it—e.g., a wasp’s stinger hitting the point on its prey’s nervous system to paralyze without killing (*Ibid.*, 172-73)—with this providing immediate knowledge of things ‘from the inside’. Instinctual knowledge is felt rather than thought (*Ibid.*, 145), with consciousness being “generally actualized only at the outset of the act” (*Ibid.*, 166), i.e., with the organism being aware of the object on which it acts, but not of the action’s outcome or of the action itself as a means to this outcome. Intelligence, on the other hand, gives knowledge of objects and their relations ‘from the outside’, being thought or represented rather than felt or enacted, and thereby allowing for generalization and inference, deliberation, and self-consciousness (*Ibid.*, 145-48). Intelligence tends towards the ordering and use of objects as instruments with which to act (*Ibid.*, 140), with our tendency to fabricate and manufacture being exemplary of its actualization.

As is any tendency, intelligence is limited, being suited to dealing with the static rather than the fluid, to quantities rather than qualities, and to instrumental thinking about “unorganized solid[s]” (*Ibid.*, 153), i.e., inert matter divided into separate objects in space, but is not suited to grasping organization, duration, and the continuity of processes, being unable to adequately comprehend vital or temporal phenomena, or the creation of the truly new (*Ibid.*, 163). Since intelligence is humanity’s primary form of consciousness our thinking tends to share its limitations; however, while instinct and intelligence are opposed in their orientation, they are not mutually exclusive, since “all concrete instinct is mingled with intelligence, as all real intelligence is penetrated by instinct” (*Ibid.*, 136), and although we may be limited in the operations of our intelligence, we are not limited to intelligence as a form of consciousness but also have access to a less developed, less distinct ‘fringe’ of instinctive awareness. “In the phenomena of [pre-reflective] feeling,” Bergson writes, “we experience in ourselves ... something of what must happen in the consciousness of an insect acting by instinct” (*Ibid.*, 175).

Although pure instinct lacks self-consciousness, because the ‘fringe’ of instinct in human consciousness is “penetrated with intelligence”, this coexistence of intelligence and the ‘fringe’ can alter the character of instinct, leading it to develop into the form of consciousness Bergson calls intuition, which he understands as “instinct that has become disinterested [i.e., speculative instead of oriented towards action], self-conscious [and] capable of reflecting upon its object” (*Ibid.*, 176). It is through intuition that we can have an awareness of things from within that is “*lived* rather than *represented*” (*Ibid.*, 175, original emphasis), allowing us to grasp conceptually phenomena with which intelligence is not equipped to deal, such as causes—where intelligence can only infer them from their outer effects—, vital organization and willed order, continuity, duration, creation, and other phenomena associated with life, with intuition allowing us to apprehend these kinds of phenomena through what can be called a “divining sympathy” (*Ibid.*).

By claiming that intuition gives us an awareness of things in their duration and a knowledge that is non-representational, Bergson indicates that intuition not only grasps the durational aspect of things but *thinks along with them* in their duration, i.e., follows the movement and progression of a process as it is occurring rather than forming a static concept of this process abstracted from its occurrence (*CM*, 22; cf. *CE*, 199-200). Since, for Bergson, reality is in flux, and since intuition puts us in touch with this flux, it alone can give us an awareness of things as they are, which he calls “absolute” knowledge in contrast to knowledge we acquire through intelligence which, coming at its object from the outside, is always relative to an external point of view (*CM*, 133-36). This, he argues, gives a way out of the Kantian denial of our ability to grasp ‘things in themselves’, which he argues is a consequence of taking intelligence to be our only form of consciousness (*CE*, 204-05, 358-61). In going beyond intelligence and instinct, then, intuition extends and expands consciousness (*CM*, 20; cf. *CE*, 193, 360) and so should be understood as part of the ongoing evolution of life, more fully actualizing the *élan*’s tendency to be conscious of matter, with intuition reflecting consciousness back onto life and the vital order itself.

In this section I have been able to give only a basic overview of the account of life advanced in *Creative Evolution*, with a necessarily selective focus on the aspects that are most relevant for

understanding the relation between life and art implied by the analogies Bergson draws between them, to which I now turn.

3.3 Analogies between Life and Art in *Creative Evolution*

Not all the references to art found in *Creative Evolution* imply an analogy between art and life that goes both ways. Some, such as Bergson's point that a book of prose does not contain the absence of poetry (*CE*, 221), or his comparison of different social tendencies in certain insect species to variations on a theme in music (*Ibid.*, 171), are meant only to help explain or clarify a point that is otherwise unrelated to art: in these examples, the unreality of 'negation' and the common source of diverging tendencies, respectively. However, most of Bergson's references to art do imply a reciprocal analogy between works of art and the artist's activity in making them on the one hand and life and organic creation on the other, with many of these points about life recurring in more than one example. The points that come up most frequently in these examples have to do with: (i) the novelty and unforeseeability of the forms that are created through the development of the *élan vital* within duration; (ii) the concurrence of the unity of the vital impulse and the multiplicity of actualized forms that manifest it; and (iii) vital creations and organized bodies being more than sums of their parts.

Bergson's first example illustrates at least two of these three points. Considering a portrait, he writes that its form "is explained by the features of the model, by the nature of the artist, by the colors ... on the palette; but even with the knowledge of what explains it, no one ... could have foreseen exactly what the portrait would be, for to predict it would have been to produce it before it was produced" (*Ibid.*, 6). He goes on to compare this to moments in the life of a person *qua* an organism capable of free and deliberate actions, where each moment "is a kind of creation" of which the person is, in a sense, the author (*Ibid.*, 7). While the explicit point that is being made here has to do with the unforeseeability of future moments within durational time, the further point that a painting, or the whole of a person's life, is more than the sum of its various 'parts'—the model, the artist's style and the paints used on one hand; the person's

external circumstances, psychological dispositions, and capacities for action on the other—is implied by the claim that the way in which both the painting and life will develop in the future cannot be deduced from the conjunction of these ‘parts’.

These points are also made when Bergson brings up art in connection with his distinction between fabrication and organic creation, where he writes of the intellect’s tendency “to direct movements combined with a view to reproducing a pattern” that can be seen to be at work in fabrication, where we intend a pattern in advance and calculate the means to achieve it in action, in contrast to the “unforeseeable creation of form” that is inherent in life’s evolution, or even “in the course of things generally”, i.e., in the progression of duration itself (*Ibid.*, 44-45). The difference between fabrication, involving the assembly of existing elements in accordance with a pre-set plan, and organic creation is paralleled with the distinction Bergson makes between artisans and artists, where artisans (i.e., fabricators) “reject the unforeseeable” and the possibility of genuine novelty or originality, whereas artists accept these, “liv[ing] on creation and [having] “a latent belief in the spontaneity of nature” (*Ibid.*, 45). Again, the explicit point that is being made here relates to the novelty and unforeseeability of organic creations, but the idea that these creations, like works of art as opposed to fabrications—i.e., what Collingwood would call works of mere craft—, are more than sums of their parts is implied by the denial that they are only “new arrangement[s] of elements already known” (*Ibid.*).

The parallel between the unforeseeability of artistic creations and the indeterminacy of life forms and their development¹¹ is reiterated in the reference to the order that is found in one of Beethoven’s symphonies being willed or vital, in contrast to the automatic or mechanistic order found in the purely physical arrangements and movement of matter, e.g., in “astronomical phenomena” (*Ibid.*, 224), as well as in an example of a painter at work on a picture (*Ibid.*, 340-41) that is similar to the first example of the portrait but which also illustrates how the duration of a creative process is an integral part of what is created, since what is truly unforeseeable and

¹¹ This point is also made in “The Possible and the Real” (1934b) with the story of Bergson’s explanation to a journalist of why he is unable to predict “the great dramatic work of tomorrow” (see *CM*, 81-82).

genuinely novel necessarily *takes time* to emerge (*Ibid.*, 341).¹² The point about artworks and organic creations being more than sums of their parts also recurs in several examples, being connected with the idea that works of art and organisms—both in their evolutionary history and in their actions—must be understood in terms of the unified and simple impulse of which they are the development, with this being the *élan vital* in the case of living beings and an initial intuition of the artist’s in the case of artworks.

This is most clearly articulated when Bergson notes that we can ‘decompose’ a painting into its component parts—e.g., coloured patches, lines, etc. —after it has been made, but that to do so is to miss the work of art as it actually is, which is the “projection of an indivisible intuition” of the artist (*Ibid.*, 89-90). Bergson uses this to illustrate how the intellect cannot account properly for vital phenomena by taking them as collections of physical or spatial ‘parts’ that are known from the outside without grasping the inner impulse or movement of which these ‘parts’ are the outward manifestations. Again, Bergson comes back to this point several times, writing that in understanding a poem, one “enter[s] into [the poet’s] thoughts, [puts oneself] into his feelings, live[s] over again the simple state he has broken into phrases and words ... sympathiz[ing] with his inspiration [and following] it with a continuous movement which is, like the inspiration itself, an undivided act” (*Ibid.*, 209). Since a poem—and, analogously, a living organism or life as a whole—is both a “multiplicity of individuated elements” (*Ibid.*, 258) and, on another level, is a single process or impulse, it is both one and many, “a unity that is multiple and a multiplicity that is one” (*Ibid.*; cf. Deleuze, 44-46), and so must be understood holistically. These points from the examples of the painting and the poem are meant to apply not only to living beings but to all phenomena falling within the scope of the vital order—i.e., everything that is ‘of life’, so to speak—so as to distinguish them from inert matter.

Because a created form is a unified whole even when it is complex in its ‘parts’, never being merely an arrangement of these, and because, *qua* creation, the form is genuinely new even when

¹² See *CE*, 340: “The time taken up by the invention, is one with the invention itself. It is the progress of a thought which is changing in the degree and measure that it is taking form.”

none of its parts is, it follows that every new organism or species created by life, and every new form brought about through the willed ordering of matter, is an addition to reality and so can be seen as expanding both the universe and the consciousness of its creator.¹³ That this idea of creation as expanding reality is part of Bergson's account can be seen when he writes that, "[i]n the composition of a work of genius, as in a simple free decision, *we do, indeed, stretch the spring of our activity* [where 'activity' could include activities of consciousness such as thinking or feeling] *to the utmost*" and that "the poet creates the poem and ... *human thought is thereby made richer*" (*Ibid.*, 239-40, my emphasis). This suggests that the evolution of life through the diversification of species, and the actualization of the tendencies that the organisms of these species embody and enact, is not only an expansion of forms of life but of life in general.

The last reference to art—or rather, to the activity of the artist—that remains to be discussed occurs in the context of the discussion of intuition as a reflective sympathetic awareness that enables us to be conscious of things from the inside, and so gives us an immediate or direct awareness and knowledge of the organization or vital order of life's creations and their activities, allowing us to think and know parts of life as they are in themselves. Being aware that most philosophical and scientific thought, and even 'common sense', being based on the intellect's way of thinking external matter, will be sceptical about the possibility of any direct or 'inner' awareness of anything other than our own minds, Bergson tries to make his claims about intuition more plausible by noting that artists exhibit this kind of awareness in their employment of "*an aesthetic faculty along with normal perception*" (*Ibid.*, 177, my emphasis). This 'aesthetic faculty', Bergson contends, makes those who exercise it aware of objects and of the mutual organization or ordering of their forms in a way that goes beyond the external view of intelligence, which takes them "merely as assembled" (*Ibid.*), to grasp the simple intention or impulse of which the external form that is visible to 'normal perception', and so is representable by intelligence, is the manifestation. "This intention," he continues, "is just what the artist tries to

¹³ Where 'life in general' is the creator, i.e., in the case of new species of organisms, because these are actualizations of tendencies to be conscious of and act on matter in new ways, they add to the ways life has of being conscious and so also can be considered as expansions of the consciousness of their 'creator'.

regain, in placing himself back within the object by a kind of sympathy, in breaking down, by an effort of intuition, the barrier that space puts up between him and his model” (*Ibid.*).¹⁴

In order for philosophy to understand vital phenomena, including the actions of living beings, in a way that takes into account their inherent temporality and the vital impetus animating them, Bergson calls for “an inquiry turned in the same direction as art, which would take life *in general* for its object” (*Ibid.*), being a metaphysics founded on intuition rather than intellect (*Ibid.*, 197-99) that would give us a way of knowing and thinking of life apart from the way in which science and geometry know and think of inert matter.¹⁵ Although this passage does not draw an analogy *per se* between life and art, it does relate the two by connecting the mode of consciousness necessary for understanding vital phenomena with what can be called ‘aesthetic understanding’, going beyond the audience’s understanding of a completed work as this is discussed in the example of a listener understanding a poem, to include the way in which the artist, in the process of creating the work, attends to her subject matter¹⁶ and the understanding she gains from attending in this way, where this understanding is the indivisible intuition that drives the work’s creation and which the work expresses. This connection between life and art at the level of conscious understanding is what suggests most directly that Bergson’s other analogies between the two are reciprocal: that life is not just ‘like art’ in certain respects, but that art is also ‘like life’ in these same respects. Hence, while Bergson is concerned with looking to art for the light it can shed on the nature of life, one might also look at life for the light it can shed on the nature of art.

¹⁴ See “The Perception of Change” (Bergson 1934c) for a further discussion of the notion of intuition as a kind of ‘aesthetic faculty’ that clarifies some of what is left vague about intuition in *Creative Evolution*. For instance, one important point that this later discussion clarifies is that intuition is still a form of perception and therefore is embodied, working on and through matter, rather than being a separate kind of immaterial or spiritual insight along the lines of, say, a ‘psychic vision’. However, it goes beyond ‘normal’ or ‘ordinary’ perception insofar as it sees materiality under the aspect of duration rather than in exclusively spatial and utilitarian terms, and so can apprehend the vital, the qualitative, and the temporal as these are themselves embodied in, and working through, the material world.

¹⁵ Cf. *CM*, 46-50, 101-05, 133-36.

¹⁶ While Bergson does not mention it, I would include the way that the artist attends to her medium and its materials as well as to her subject matter, where the medium may be the only ‘subject matter’ to speak of in the case of certain abstract, non-representational, or conceptual artworks.

3.3.1 Implications of the Analogies for an Account of Art

In comparing artworks and the artist's creative activity to life and its creation of organisms, Bergson cannot help but make claims about the nature of art that fall within the domain of aesthetics. Most obviously, the things that Bergson argues to be true of life and vital phenomena, and which he is using the references to art to help illustrate by analogy, are things he also holds to be true of art. Thus—to quickly recap some of the previous section's points—, Bergson is explicitly claiming that the precise form of a work of art is unforeseeable prior to the moment of its creation, being genuinely original and so not determined by or deducible from the material or psychological conditions obtaining at any earlier moment, although it does emerge from these conditions, being a growth or expansion of them, and in particular an expansion of the artist's initial impulse or intuition that runs through the work as its unifying principle. Moreover, Bergson is claiming that because works of art are genuinely novel, whereas their material components exist prior to a work's creation, they cannot be reducible to the matter of which they are made and so are always more than mere sums of their parts. Because of this, the intellect and its habit of analyzing a thing by breaking it down into its components are ill-suited to understand art *qua* art, whereas intuition is suited to understanding art since it gives an awareness of unity and processes through something like a 'divining sympathy' from within rather than being limited, as intelligence is, to viewing an object externally.

Bergson also states that works of art are ordered, and that this order is willed or vital as opposed to the automatic geometrical order of inert matter, and that they expand the consciousness—i.e., the possibilities of perception, thinking, and feeling—of the artists in their making of them, where their abilities are “stretch[ed] ... to the utmost”, as well as of their audiences whose consciousnesses are similarly expanded in their reception of artworks, with “human thought [being] made richer” by their creation (*CE*, 239-40). As well as tying artistic perception to intuition, Bergson insists that artworks need to be understood in terms of duration, being themselves processes rather than just results of these processes, with the time that such a

process takes being an essential part of a work itself since, had it been created over a longer or shorter span of time, it would differ in at least some way, with this difference having to do with the difference that the duration of the process makes to the artist's consciousness and to the degree of development of her initial impulse or intuition.¹⁷

In addition to these explicit claims that Bergson makes about the nature of art, a number of points about art are implied by his examples although not stated as directly as those listed above. First, to hold that a work of art is more than the sum of its physical components, and that its creation is not merely the re-arranging of these components but the bringing of something genuinely new into existence, implies that an artwork, *qua* art, is not identical or reducible to its material embodiment—for instance, that a painting, *qua* art, is not the physical, material canvas and blobs of paint that exist in space and can be quantified, but is something additional that emerges in the process of the artist's manipulation of them, although it is necessarily tied to them in the way that, e.g., Bergson takes intuition to be additional to, although based in, ordinary perception. The implication that works of art are not *simply* or *essentially* material objects¹⁸ relates to Bergson's insistence that one is unable to understand art works—or any organized bodies—through intelligence, which can only conceive them in terms of space and analyze them through the 'decomposition' of their parts, and that aesthetic understanding must involve intuition. If the work of art is something more than merely the matter in which it is physically embodied, it follows that simply seeing or hearing it via what Bergson calls 'normal perception' will not be sufficient for apprehending the work itself, although it is likely necessary for some part of the work to be 'normally perceptible': e.g., it is plausible that a work can be seen *intuitively* only if it can be seen in the 'ordinary' sense.

¹⁷ A version of the 'cinematographic illusion' that Bergson critiques (see *CE*, 304ff) can be seen in the idea that the same work of art could have been created in more or less time, since this involves thinking of the actions taken in the embodiment of the work in a material medium—e.g., the applications of certain amounts of paint to certain areas of the canvas, the strokes of a chisel against the marble, the writing or typing of words, etc.—as being slowed down or sped up, *but still occurring in the same order*, like we would see if we filmed the artist at work and then sped up or slowed down the film. Bergson's point here is that any change in the time taken with one such action could change the subsequent action, resulting in a different work.

¹⁸ Note that one can accept this while maintaining that many artworks necessarily involve material components; e.g., one cannot create a painting without some coloured pigments and some material surface on which to apply them.

The claim that a spectator can only understand a work of art *qua* art through the exercise of intuition, or what could be called ‘aesthetic perception’, over and above the ‘normal perception’ that is involved in the operations of intelligence, when considered together with Bergson’s claim that the artist employs this intuition or aesthetic perception in her way of attending to the ‘subject matter’ of her work—including, I would add, the medium in which she works—in order to grasp something of how it is ‘in itself’, implies that the spectator’s process of understanding a work is the same as a part of the artist’s process of creating it. In other words, the way that works of art demand to be attended to and the way artists attend to parts of the world is the same, from which it follows that artworks promote the exercise of the aesthetic faculty in their audience, lending support to the claim that because the artist has expanded her consciousness—i.e., her capacities of intuition, perception, thinking, feeling, etc.—in making the work, having “stretch[ed] the spring of [her] activity to the utmost” (*CE*, 239) in order to create something genuinely original, the consciousness of her audience is also expanded through their apprehending what is original in the work and thereby being presented with new possibilities of how to look, hear, think, feel, etc.¹⁹ A further implication to be drawn from this is that to engage intuitively with a work of art is not to engage with a material object—at least, not *qua* material—but rather with another consciousness, viz., the artist’s, as apprehended ‘through’ the organized material form.²⁰

In relation to the point that works of art, *qua* art, are not essentially or merely material, the distinction that Bergson draws between artists and artisans when distinguishing creation from fabrication or manufacture (*Ibid.*, 44-45) implies that artworks are importantly different from manufactured artifacts, in part because manufacturing involves the reproduction of a pattern and so does not typically result in anything genuinely novel or original, since both the ‘form’ (the pattern) and the ‘content’ (the materials) exist prior to the manufacture. On the other hand, with

¹⁹ This gives weight to the claim that “human thought is ... made richer” by works of art (*CE*, 240) by elaborating on just what this involves. Cf. *CM*, 86 for the idea that perceiving “the ever-recurring novelty, the moving originality of things” gives us “greater strength” by inspiring us to be creators of ourselves.

²⁰ This clarifies what Bergson means when he says that a portrait resembles its artist as well as its model (*CE*, 341); i.e., that it does not only present the way its model looks but also the artist’s *way of seeing the model*, where this can be ‘consciousness-expanding’ for viewers even when the person who posed for the portrait is familiar to them.

art, the ‘form’ of a work is not prior to its creation. This distinction between art and fabrication complicates Bergson’s discussion of the two kinds of order—i.e., the vital/willed and the inert/automatic—and in particular the claim made in his reference to a symphony of Beethoven’s that the order that artworks possess is of the first kind, with this potentially adding a further distinction to Bergson’s theory of organic creation and organized bodies.

From the example of the room that is not literally ‘disordered’ but rather displays a different kind of order than was expected (*Ibid.*, 232), it can be seen that Bergson takes the intentional re-arranging of matter to be an instance of vital or willed ordering—“the order that a methodical person consciously puts into his life” (*Ibid.*)—as distinct from the ‘automatic’ arrangement of matter as an effect of inanimate physical forces, e.g., gravity. The intentional arranging of matter, even if it is done according to a pre-existing plan, still involves some degree of indeterminacy insofar as this particular plan did not have to be followed as opposed to some other, in contrast to the determinacy that is involved in the automatic order where, given an object’s weight, the forces acting on it, etc., its resulting movement and the position it will end up in is necessitated. Since fabrication involves intentionally re-arranging matter in space for a purpose—e.g., a carpenter putting pieces of wood and nails into a certain spatial arrangement for the purpose that it be sat on—, the order that is found in products of fabrication—i.e., artifacts—is vital or willed.

Given that artworks and artifacts are both instances of vital or willed order, and given that Bergson distinguishes art from artifacts and an artist’s creative process from an artificer’s method of manufacture, a further difference within the vital or willed order is required. The distinction between artworks and artifacts is due not to a difference between vital vs. mechanical order, but to the order in a work of art being unforeseeable and thus part of what is original in the work, in contrast to the order in an artifact which, although willed, involves the reproduction of an existing pattern by the artificer and so is not original. That there are, then, degrees of vital or willed ordering, with artworks displaying a higher degree than artifacts—and so being ‘more vital’, as it were, i.e., more closely connected to life and its impetus—, suggests that artistic creation is closer to organic creation than it is to fabrication, both in the process of creation and

in the result, and that this higher degree of order is closer to what Bergson calls ‘organization’, if not itself a type of organization.

The claim that artworks are not merely (vitality/wilfully) *ordered*, as are other products of deliberate human activity such as fabrication, but are *organized*, will be controversial in light of Bergson’s own reservation of this term for living bodies, i.e., organisms. Artworks clearly are not alive in the way that life’s organic creations are, so if organization is limited to living bodies it would be impossible for artworks to be anything more than ordered. However, artworks can be seen to parallel living bodies in at least one respect that is relevant for Bergson’s classification of the latter as organized.

For Bergson, living bodies are individuated or “separated and closed off” by nature, which is to say, *intrinsically* (*Ibid.*, 12), whereas inanimate material objects are ‘closed off’ by our perception along lines of possible action, so any order or structure they display is relative to our faculties of perception and capacities for action and is thus *extrinsic* to them. Likewise, works of art are more inherently ‘closed off’ or individuated than are manufactured artifacts, with the relations between the ‘parts’ comprising the whole being internally connected and inherent to the essence of the work—and thus, more intrinsic—in contrast to the relations between the parts of an artifact, which are relative to a purpose or function and so are extrinsic. Changes made to the parts of an artifact will not *necessarily* alter its essence as the artifact that it is, which is based on the possibilities for action that it holds for us. However, *any* change made to a work of art will necessarily make it a different—though perhaps very similar—work, since, in the absence of a purpose or function,²¹ the relations of its ‘parts’ are all internal and essential to it as the particular work of art that it is.

It is on account of the internal relations of their parts and the corresponding degree of closure or individuation they exhibit that Bergson classifies living bodies as organized, so it

²¹ While some artworks do have functions or purposes—e.g., ceramic pots, religious painting, works of architecture, etc.—it is not clear that they possess them *qua* art as opposed to *qua* material object, where the object also happens to be the embodiment of a work of art. That what is aesthetic in a pot is distinct from what is functional in it can be seen by noting that a change can be made to the pot that would alter it *as an artwork* but not as a functional object.

would seem to follow that if works of art can be shown to be comprised of similar internal relations, and to be individuated in a comparable way to living organisms, they could legitimately be counted as organized and not merely ordered. The considerations above suggest that artworks are made up of internal relations, with whatever structure they possess being intrinsic to them, and so it seems plausible to claim that a particular artwork is at least as unique, and hence individual, as a particular living organism. Moreover, the implication discussed above that artworks are not essentially or merely material objects, which is entailed by their being more than the sums of their parts, might exempt artworks from what Bergson calls ‘unorganized’ bodies since, not being merely material, they are not (*qua* art) marked out in our perception according to possibilities of our acting on them and so the way they are individuated or ‘closed off’ is not merely relative.²²

An apparent—and apparently significant—disanalogy here is that Bergson specifically says that organized bodies are “closed off *by nature herself*” (*Ibid.*, my emphasis), whereas works of art are the results of human activity and so, insofar as they are closed off, are closed off *by us* and, it may be insisted, are therefore not organized but ordered. However, this objection presupposes a division between what is ‘natural’ and what is ‘man-made’ that Bergson himself does not make and likely would not support, since he sees the movements and actions of living organisms, including humans, as driven by and so continuous with the *élan vital* or life in its general sense. The tendency for humans to act on matter is itself an actualization of the tendency of *life in general* to act on matter: i.e., it is a manifestation of the *élan*, as well as being a human action. Thus, in saying that a thing is “closed off by nature herself” Bergson is not using ‘nature’ to mean ‘not man-made’: rather, he seems to mean that it has developed through a process of inner growth where this process unifies its parts from within, in contrast to a thing whose parts are assembled from without, where such a thing will be no more than their sum.

²² Note that apart from cases of interactive installation art, if I am perceiving a work such as a painting, sculpture, novel, etc., in terms of the possibilities of my acting on or with it, I am doing so only *qua* material object and not in its aesthetic aspect, in the way that Picasso’s *Guernica* has a certain weight, smell, etc. *qua* material object but not *qua* artwork, or that each copy of Joyce’s *Ulysses* has a height, weight and texture *qua* book but not *qua* novel.

Since Bergson explicitly holds that an artwork is more than the sum of its parts, and that it develops out of an initial intuition or feeling of the artist's which gets expanded in the creative process and with which the resulting work is continuous, with this process of development and the time it takes being parts of the work itself, I argue that we are warranted to claim that artworks are individuated or 'closed off' in a way that is analogous to the way living organisms are, and so it is legitimate to claim that artworks are also organized bodies, albeit non-living ones. This conclusion fits with and helps give substance to many of the common and apparently metaphorical ways that artists' talk of their work in progress, e.g., in terms of 'what the work wants' or of works 'creating themselves'—e.g., of novels or characters 'writing themselves'—, of a work 'having a life of its own', of a sculptor finding the shape that is 'already contained in' and 'waiting to emerge from' a block of marble or lump of clay, etc. If the artist's initial intuition of which the work is the growth or development, like the *élan vital*, contains a number of virtual elements or tendencies that are actualized in the creative process, any work in progress will have a certain number of directions that are appropriate to it at a point in its development—i.e., that it 'wants to go in'—and some that are not—i.e., that it 'resists'—, with the virtual elements of this intuition seeming like an autonomous 'life' or 'personality' that the work has, since the artist is both aware of these directions and tendencies and is aware that these are things she did not put into the work herself, but were already 'there', albeit 'virtually' and in retrospect.

A further implication of the considerations raised in this section, and in particular of this last conclusion about artworks being organized bodies, is that unlike the fabrication of other artifacts, which might be considered 'fully designed' or 'fully willed', not all of the aspects of a work of art will be the direct result of its artist's will: rather, at least some of its aspects will have emerged 'organically' during the process of its creation, being the developments of tendencies of the initial intuition of which the work is the expression.²³ What all of this suggests is that

²³ Whether or not these tendencies are actualized, which will likely be a matter of how well the initial intuition is expressed, will depend on the artist—e.g., a lesser artist may not actualize as many of these tendencies, or do so only partially, leading to an incomplete expression of the initial intuition—but *what* these tendencies are is not dependent in this way, as they are inherent in the intuition.

artworks and the processes of their creation are not only analogous in some respects to life forms and their evolutionary development but, more strongly, that artistic creation is actually a *microcosm* of life's creation of organisms and species, and that, in creating works of art, artists are, in a sense, enacting the process by which organisms evolve. This brings the account that I have argued is implicit in Bergson's references to art in line with Gabriel Séailles' thesis, to which Bergson alludes in a footnote, that "art is a continuation of nature" (*CE*, 29fn).²⁴ While fabrication, being one of the ways that life's tendency to act on matter is actualized, could also be said to be a continuation of nature, i.e., of the *élan vital*, fabrication is teleological, being done for the sake of some purpose, and so cannot be seen as a microcosm of organic creation in the way that art-making can, since organic creation is not teleological in this way, or at least not for Bergson, given his arguments against radical finalism discussed above.

If the human tendency to create art is understood as an extension of the movement of the *élan vital*, then, since artworks have been shown on Bergson's understanding to be consciousness-expanding for both their creator and their audience, art can be seen as a phase of the *élan*'s own development insofar as it is involved in the (re-)awakening of intuition from the intermingling of instinct by intelligence: thus, art is an essential part of the evolution of life itself. What remains to be considered is how this understanding of art relates to what others have had to say concerning Bergson's aesthetic thought and how it relates to ideas that Bergson develops elsewhere than in *Creative Evolution*.

3.4 Relating the Implicit Account to Other Work on Bergson's Aesthetics

As noted above, little has been written on Bergson's understanding of art itself as distinct from his theory of the comic or the influence of his thinking on early 20th century art, with the exceptions of Ruth Lorand's essay "Bergson's Conception of Art" (1999) and Ryu Murakami's "Transmission of Creativity: An Essay on the Aesthetics of Henri Bergson" (2009). However,

²⁴ Curiously, given how close it seems to be to his own understanding of art, Bergson only comments on the second part of Séailles' thesis—viz., "that life is creation"—saying he accepts it as long as 'creation' is understood organically rather than as a synthesis of separate elements, the latter being Séailles' understanding.

neither paper's main aim is to put together an overview of Bergson's thoughts on art, either as found in one of his works or throughout his writings, although Murakami's paper comes closer to doing this. Instead, Lorand focuses on Bergson's argument against the reality of disorder and brings in his thoughts on art as a way of supposedly refuting his argument—although, as I will show, Lorand's own argument is based on a systematic misreading of Bergson on most of the points she discusses—where Murakami is concerned more with tracing the development of Bergson's ideas of intuition and the *élan* from 1900's *Laughter* to 1932's *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, and while he does discuss several of Bergson's remarks on art, his primary focus is on the concepts of intuition and the *élan* and their development, contrary to what his title suggests. This leaves room to further explore the relation between Bergson's use of examples of art and artists in *Creative Evolution* and *Two Sources*, and of the compatibility of the views on art that these examples suggest.

3.4.1 Lorand on Bergson's Aesthetics

Lorand's paper on Bergson's theory of art is primarily concerned with exposing what she takes to be tensions and inconsistencies in the view of art that she finds contained in Bergson's works. This view of art that she takes to be Bergson's might initially seem to be in line with my claim, argued for above, that works of art as well as living bodies are organized, since she writes that “interrelations among the components [of organized bodies] are necessitated from within and do not depend on any eternal purpose,” and that “[w]orks of art should be like organized bodies in this respect. The borders of a work have to be determined by the nature of the components, not by an external purpose” (Lorand 1999, 406). However, both this claim and the problems she finds in the view of art that she takes to be Bergson's in fact result from Lorand's misreading of Bergson's remarks. With the above claim, this misreading involves a conflation of Bergson's distinctions between organized and unorganized bodies on the one hand, and vital or willed order and inert or automatic order on the other, which is part of a larger misunderstanding that runs throughout her paper concerning Bergson's idea of these two kinds of order.

This misunderstanding seems to rest on the assumption that Bergson's philosophy is based on a dualism between time and space, with everything belonging exclusively to either one or the other, and that this corresponds to his ideas of two kinds of order, such that what Lorand calls the "geometrical order" is the order that belongs to things that are spatial and the vital order is that which belongs to things that are temporal (*Ibid.*, 402). While Bergson does distinguish between time and space—or, more precisely, between understanding things in terms of spatial concepts and viewing them from the perspective of duration—, saying that he is a 'space-time dualist' implies that he thinks both are equally real,²⁵ whereas if anything he is what we might call a 'time monist', since he argues that even things about which we most naturally think in spatial terms ultimately need to be understood in terms of duration. If any dualism is to be found in Bergson, especially in *Creative Evolution* and its discussion of the two kinds of order, it is between life and matter.²⁶ Unfortunately, Lorand conflates this dualism with Bergson's distinction between vital or willed order and inert or automatic order, equating the vital order with life and what she calls 'geometrical order' with matter.

Lorand's misreading of Bergson on these points, and her insistence on taking any distinction as an exclusive 'either-or' dualism, leads her to think that Bergson's claim that works of art have a vital order—e.g., in his example of the Beethoven symphony—entails a denial that artworks are *ever* ordered in a way that is 'geometrical' or that they have anything to do with that which can be understood by the intellect.²⁷ By way of offering a counter-example she notes that a poem is made up of words, the meanings of which are intellectual, and that the way the words are arranged has an element of geometrical structure to it (*Ibid.*, 408). However, Bergson does not deny that organic beings are materially embodied and can be measured, quantified, or otherwise treated 'geometrically', but only denies that *living* matter can be understood or treated in the

²⁵ I.e., in the same sense that a mind-body dualist thinks reality is comprised of both the mental and the physical as separate kinds of 'substance'.

²⁶ Even this is not a 'hard-and-fast' dualism, as I argue above, since both life and matter exist within duration, and since Bergson claims that consciousness and matter share the same origin (*CE*, 199-201, 237-38).

²⁷ A characteristic claim that reveals her misreading is: "Bergson's firm dualism denies any positive interaction between intuition and intellect" (Lorand 1999, 407).

same way as *inert* matter without its vital essence being overlooked, so her example does not count against anything that Bergson says. Since Bergson thinks that either of the two kinds of order can apply to material, non-living things arranged in space, as shown by his example of a meticulously arranged room displaying a vital or willed order (*CE*, 232), Lorand's assumption of a one-to-one correspondence between the vital order and living things on the one hand and the 'geometrical' order and material things on the other, with no overlap, is mistaken.

Her second major misunderstanding of Bergson has to do with his critique of the notion of disorder, where she reads his claims that there is always *some* order in things, and that we never find the absence of *any* order but are only disappointed in our expectations of finding a *certain* order, through her mistaken view of the two kinds of order to imply that whenever we expect to find a certain vital or willed order but have this expectation frustrated, the alternate order we do find will be 'geometric'. This, however, is not what Bergson means, since his claim that there will always be some order and his distinction between orders that are vital/willed and those that are inert/automatic are not meant to go together like this: there can be several ways in which a certain object can be ordered that are vital or willed, and several that are automatic, such that the difference between the order that we expect to find and the order we actually do find can involve two orders of the same kind.

As well as misunderstanding Bergson on this point, Lorand misreads his explanation of what occurs when we encounter an order other than the one we were expecting, thinking that he is claiming that we feel 'disappointed' in the sense of being dissatisfied or unhappy with the order that we find (Lorand 1999, 411). However, while we might feel this way in such situations, Bergson can be read as saying that it is *our expectations* that are 'disappointed' in the sense that they are 'not met', with no negative emotion necessarily being involved: while there will be some affect involved in the experience of encountering an order other than we were expecting, there is no reason why this affect should necessarily be negative, since encountering an unexpected order might, in some contexts, come as a pleasant surprise rather than a source of displeasure. Lorand's overly literal reading of 'disappointment' here, coupled with her reading of

Bergson's statement "reality is *ordered* exactly to the degree in which it satisfies our thought" (CE, 223, original emphasis) as claiming that we are always 'satisfied' (i.e., happy) by the order that is in things, leads to what she takes to be another problem for Bergson's account of art: if, given Bergson's denial of the reality of disorder, things are always ordered in some way, and if he holds that this order always 'satisfies' our thought, then, she claims, "it is not clear at all why works of art are created" (Lorand 1999, 414-15), since the order they contain would be no more satisfying than the order we are replacing.

If Lorand's reading here were correct, this would not only pose a problem for why works of art are ever created: it would also make it unclear why anyone would ever be motivated to act on matter in any way if things were always 'satisfactory' just as we find them. However, this is shown to be a false problem once we note that Bergson's talk of the disappointment of our expectations of one kind of order, and of reality being ordered to the degree that it satisfies our thought, refers to our expectations not being met and to order fitting into our ways of thinking, respectively, and not to any pleasure or displeasure we might feel as a result. The order we find in something may 'satisfy our thought' in the sense that it is thinkable and knowable for us, but we may nevertheless be 'unsatisfied' with it in the sense of preferring a different order, which would then motivate us to take action, e.g., to create a work of art.

Since it is based on a misreading of Bergson, Lorand's paper does not pose any problems for the account of art that I have drawn from Bergson's analogies and his theory of organic creation. Although my reading of Bergson's view of art explains how artworks can be organized without being living bodies and provides answers to the question of why art is made—i.e., because it manifests the creative impulse of life—and why it is valuable—i.e., because it expands consciousness—, it does not directly offer solutions to the problems with which Lorand is concerned since, based on misreadings, they are not genuine problems for Bergson. Likewise, while there are points of similarity between the view of art that Lorand attributes to Bergson and the view that I have presented here, Lorand's paper cannot be said to support my reading of Bergson's remarks on art since, as I have argued, even these points of similarity are affected by

her overall misconstrual of Bergson's thought. However, Murakami's discussion of Bergson's notion of art and its development throughout his career is compatible with and lends support to my reading, since the view of art that I have argued is implied by Bergson's ideas in *Creative Evolution* fits into the developmental story that Murakami tells as a transition-point between Bergson's remarks on art in *Laughter* and in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*.

3.4.2 Murakami on Bergson's Aesthetics and The Two Sources of Morality and Religion

As Murakami notes, in 1900's *Laughter* we find the idea that 'normal perception' is restricted in its scope to what is practically useful in objects and so cannot grasp the wider reality of things as they are 'in themselves', whereas artists, being somewhat detached from practical or instrumental concerns, perceive things as they are and communicate this in their art; however, this idea is not yet tied to intuition as it is in *Creative Evolution* (Murakami 2009 48; cf. Bergson 1900, 136-38). Murakami shows how the idea of the artist and her 'pure perception', once it is connected with the faculty of intuition in *Creative Evolution*, becomes the model for Bergson's conception in *Two Sources* of the mystic as one who is directly conscious of the *élan*, which by 1932 has come to be associated in Bergson's thought with God and eternity, and who expresses this consciousness to others, giving humanity a glimpse of eternity and of the divine that would otherwise not be perceived (Murakami 2009, 47-48, 50-52). For the idea of the mystic as someone who shares his awareness of the *élan* to have developed from Bergson's earlier idea of the artist reinforces my reading of Bergson as taking the artist's expression of her intuitive insight through her work to be 'consciousness-expanding' for her audience, just as her intuitive awareness through her 'aesthetic faculty' expands her own consciousness of things.

Additionally, Murakami's discussion of the transition from *Laughter*'s idea of the work of art communicating the artist's 'pure' perception to the idea in *Two Sources* that what an artistic work of 'genius' transmits is the artist's *élan*—with '*élan*' here being understood as a demand for creation felt by the artist that is the impetus for the work (*Ibid.*, 52-54; cf. *TSMR*, 37-39, 66, 241-43)—supports my claims concerning artistic creation being a manifestation of the *élan*

vital's general tendency to create new forms and art being therefore continuous with life and its development. If life is a current running through matter and organizing it (*CE*, 26), this current is what drives the creation of art, as well as driving biological reproduction, with works of art containing and displaying traces of the current of life in their organization—or, on a more conservative reading, in the higher degree of vital order than is found in a manufactured artifact—, just as the form into which iron filings have been arranged by a hand moving through them displays the trace of the hand's movement (*Ibid.*, 94; cf. *TSMR*, 54). As well, Bergson's talk in *Two Sources* of a work of art developing out of an initial emotion that is “not produced by a representation [i.e., a ready-made image] which it follows and from which it remains distinct”, but rather being “pregnant with representations [i.e., containing ‘virtual’ images] ... which it draws or might draw from its own substance *by an organic development*” (*TSMR*, 35, my emphasis)—with this initial emotion being characterized by Murakami as the “seed” from which the work grows (Murakami 2009, 52)—supports my claim that the creation of a work of art is a process analogous to the growth of a living body, and that artworks can therefore be considered not just to be ordered but *organized* bodies, i.e., non-living organic structures.

As Murakami notes, interviews with Bergson from the 1910s and '20s show that he had turned his thinking toward art and to questions of morality and God after writing *Creative Evolution* (*Ibid.*, 45, fn.1),²⁸ which indicates that the references and analogies to art discussed above reflect a more substantial intellectual concern of Bergson's with art, which taking them merely as illustrative examples would overlook. It also suggests that these analogies are a phase in the evolution, as it were, of his thinking on art, with the latter developing alongside and being influenced by his account of life. That the view of art and the creative activity of artists that I have argued is implicit in *Creative Evolution* fits with Murakami's analysis of the development of Bergson's thinking on this subject lends support to my argument, as do the passages from *Two*

²⁸ In his footnote, Murakami cites Gouhier's *Bergson et le Christ des évangiles* which refers to multiple interviews by Isaac Benrubi, Joseph Lotte, and Gilbert Maire, in all of which Bergson indicates that his next project—i.e., what came to be *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*—would either be on aesthetics or morality, which suggests that he took these topics to be connected.

Sources dealing with art as expressing the artist's *élan* and as developing through a process of organic growth from an initial emotion or intuition. Moreover, the account I have presented fleshes out Murakami's discussion of the ideas of intuition, the aesthetic faculty, and the *élan* in *Creative Evolution* as a transition point between Bergson's thoughts on art in *Laughter* and his characterization of the mystic in *Two Sources* by unpacking and exploring the implications of these remarks in greater detail.

Although the view of art that I have argued is found in *Creative Evolution* is compatible with the understanding of art that Murakami attributes to Bergson, Murakami's reading of the figures of the artist and the mystic could be seen to make them more equivalent than they are in Bergson's thought, or at least to overlook a potential incompatibility between Bergson's understanding of art and artists in *Two Sources* and the view that I have argued he holds in *Creative Evolution*. While it is not essential for my purposes in this chapter that the two be compatible, since my focus is on the view of art that is implicit in *Creative Evolution* and does not require this to have remained the view that Bergson held later on in his career, it is worth briefly discussing this potential incompatibility, especially since I will argue that it can be overcome and that the views of art that can be found in these two works can be read as largely compatible and complementary.

The potentially incompatibility lies in taking *Two Sources* to understand artists and their creative activities in the same way that mystics and religious figures are understood in that work, since this would be in tension with the view I am arguing is found in *Creative Evolution* that the creation of art is an instance of the expansive impulse of life, and as such is continuous with evolution as a product of the *élan vital*. The tension arises because in *Two Sources*, Bergson writes of nature as tending towards the development of what he calls "closed" societies, in which social bonds and moral obligations are internal to that society and require the exclusion of those outside of it, e.g., those from other societies or cultures (see, e.g., TSMR, 30, 38). He sees this tendency as natural because he takes it to aid the continued survival of the societies that are so 'closed', e.g., since it fosters a kind of love toward members of that society that will motivate

socially advantageous behaviour: e.g., feelings of solidarity or being ‘in it together’, especially when set against an out-group with which the society sees itself as competing for its survival.

The way beyond the in-group morality of a closed—and ‘natural’—society toward the kind of ‘open’ morality of a universal love or solidarity for all humankind that transcends the boundaries of specific societies or cultures is possible, Bergson contends, only through a kind of leap away from, or break with, nature (*Ibid.*, 30, 52). Mystics and spiritual leaders are those who are able to make this break and introduce new forms of awareness, and the new social or cultural arrangements that these make possible, that go beyond how we are ‘naturally’ inclined to feel and behave, overcoming ‘closed’ nature, as it were, through a higher and more ‘open’ form of culture. The worry here is that if artists and their creative activities come to be associated with mystics and the ‘opening’ of social reality and our capacities for feeling, etc., which Bergson seems to do in *Two Sources*, art would no longer be continuous with nature—i.e., life and organic evolution—in the way that I have argued Bergson understands it. Indeed, we might take artistic creation to be paradigmatically ‘open’ in the sense Bergson uses here—and so, it would seem, ‘unnatural’—, with craft or fabrication being paradigmatically ‘closed’ activities—and, it would seem, to be more continuous with our ‘natural’ development as a species.

This worry can be dissolved, I argue, by noting that Bergson uses the term ‘nature’ in *Two Sources* to refer to organic life as it has developed at a certain point, and not as synonymous with organic life or its development as a whole. In other words, since Bergson is addressing different, though related, questions in *Creative Evolution* and *Two Sources* we do not need to take him to be using terms in the same way, and so what is deemed ‘natural’ in the former work, which is concerned primarily with organic life and evolution, need not be equivalent to what is called ‘natural’ in the latter which is ultimately concerned with the notion of God or the divine and its place in the biological worldview set out in the former text.²⁹ Thus, while those figures discussed

²⁹ Cf. Murakami 2009, 46, where he notes that the impetus for Bergson to write *Two Sources* is his regret, expressed in a 1926 interview, that *Creative Evolution* did not discuss the origins of the *élan*, i.e., ‘God’. Given his concern in *Two Sources*, his use of ‘nature’ there can plausibly be read as a counterpart to the notion of ‘grace’ to which it is sometimes opposed in religious discourse, and not necessarily to encompass all manifestations of organic life.

in *Two Sources* whose efforts lead to more ‘open’ societies and forms of feeling might be said to break with what is natural, in the sense of how life has developed at a given moment or phase of its evolution, it does not follow that their creative and consciousness-expanding efforts are not manifestations of the *élan*’s drive toward growth and expansion as it is characterized in *Creative Evolution*. Likewise, certain evolutionary developments discussed in *Creative Evolution*, e.g., the development of intuition as a new form of consciousness in addition to instinct and intelligence, might be said to ‘break from’ nature in the sense this phrase is used in *Two Sources* insofar as they go beyond the forms that life has developed at a certain stage of its evolution—i.e., the extent of what is ‘natural’ at that time—in radically new ways that cannot be predicted or derived in advance from nature as it has developed up to that point.

Several passages in *Two Sources* support this reading of artistic activity as both contributing to the ‘opening’ of human life with respect to its forms of awareness, including forms of feeling, and its culture or forms of social arrangement against the ‘closed’ forms of any stage of its development taken as a ‘*status quo*’, and as being continuous with organic life and the *élan*’s drive toward growth and expansion as found in *Creative Evolution*. One such passage, which calls into question any hard-and-fast distinction between ‘nature’ and the expansive activities of mystics and other ‘openers’ of society and of feeling, occurs where Bergson writes that “if we went down to the roots of nature itself”—as we might take him to do in *Creative Evolution*—“we should perhaps find that the same force which manifests itself directly ... in the human species once constituted [i.e., once evolution has developed humanity, thereby making possible the emergence of intuition from intelligence and instinct], also acts later and indirectly, through the medium of privileged persons [i.e., mystics, and perhaps artists], in order to drive humanity forward” (*TSMR*, 50-51). In other words, we should not see artistic creation or mystical insight, as products of intuition, as being separate from organic life and its development, but rather as a further instance of the *élan*’s forward impulsion, with the *élan* acting ‘indirectly’ through artists’ organizing activities rather than acting ‘directly’ by developing organic forms from within. This reading of the above passage is reinforced by another, coming a few pages later, in which

Bergson acknowledges “an impression of *coincidence ... with the generative effort of life*” (*Ibid.*, 54) at the core of the ‘open’ form of morality based on the mystical or religious ideal of universal love for humanity as a whole, as an extension of the ‘closed’ kind of morality and a finite form of love that does not extend beyond a given society and its members. Moreover, of this ‘open’ morality, Bergson goes on to write that the sense of “obligation” that it involves “is the force of ... the very impetus which culminated in the human species” (*Ibid.*, 55), which clarifies that what he elsewhere calls a ‘break’ with nature is part of the workings of the *élan vital*.³⁰

Since we need not take Bergson’s talk of a break with, or a leap away from, nature to entail any incompatibility between the view of art that I have argued is implicit in *Creative Evolution* and Bergson’s remarks on artists in *Two Sources*, we can see these latter remarks as supporting this earlier view of art. One important addition that the remarks in *Two Sources* can make to this account of art concerns the notion of creative emotions, in which Bergson includes distinctly artistic emotions, over and above what we can call reactive emotions. The latter kind of emotion, Bergson writes, is “the consequence of an idea, or of a mental picture”—i.e., a representation—being a kind of “stirring of sensibility” by this representation (*Ibid.*, 43): in other words, it is a matter of an idea or a perception activating our existing tendencies to respond, emotionally, in a certain way towards it, with the stimulus (i.e., the representation) and the response (i.e., the emotion it elicits) remaining distinct as, respectively, cause and effect. The former, creative kind of emotion, however, “is not produced by a representation which it follows and from which it remains distinct,” but instead is characterized by Bergson as “pregnant with representations, not one of which is actually formed [i.e., already present prior to the emotion], but which it draws or might draw from its own substance by an organic development” (*Ibid.*, 43-44). In other words, it is a kind of feeling that is itself the source of, and so in a sense causes, ideas or ‘mental pictures’ rather than being caused by them and, moreover, does not play on our existing tendencies to feel

³⁰ See also *TSMR*, 51, 58, 97, and 100 for passages suggesting that Bergson takes the efforts of spiritual leaders, mystics, and similar figures to expand human consciousness and culture as manifestations of the *élan*, and so are not in fact discontinuous with life and its ongoing evolution as presented in *Creative Evolution*, but only with what organic forms and their tendencies have become (‘nature’) at a specific point in this evolution.

in certain ways but rather gives us a new way of feeling. An example of such a feeling in the domain of the religious or spiritual is that of universal love or solidarity with humanity—or, perhaps, a solidarity that goes beyond the human species to include all living beings—, where a feeling of this sort does not come from an existing way of conceiving of humanity, or of life, but itself gives us a new way of conceiving and regarding its object.

That Bergson takes artworks to be a source of such creative emotions in addition to spiritual or religious insights is seen from his example of what he calls a “musical emotion”, where his point can be extended to art in general. “Each new musical work,” he writes, “brings with it new feelings, which are created by that music and within that music, are defined and delineated by the lines, unique of their kind, of the melody or symphony” (*Ibid.*, 40-41). Such a work, he insists, “does not introduce these feelings into us”, i.e., merely cause them in us by arousing or evoking them; rather “it introduces us into them” (*Ibid.*, 40), i.e., brings us into an expanded community of feeling. This creation of new feelings is attributed in other passages to moral and spiritual pioneers as well as to artists (e.g., *Ibid.*, 80), and is consistent with the view of art I have argued is implicit in *Creative Evolution*. In their capacity to create new feelings that bring with them new ideas and ways of ‘picturing’ the world, artists, like Bergson’s mystics and other spiritual pioneers, break the ‘closed’ circle of the social given with their activity which, as an extension of the *élan*’s general creative impulse to grow and expand by working through matter, remains continuous with life and its vital impulse, and so play a part in opening up the social, affective, and cognitive possibilities of humanity to advance our cultural, if not our biological, evolution.

3.5 Conclusion: Summary and Implications

In this chapter I have examined Bergson’s remarks on art and artists in the context of his overall philosophy of life and duration—attending in particular to his analogies between artworks and their creation and organic life and its evolutionary development as found in *Creative Evolution*—in order to bring out and develop the implicit account of art they contain. I have also argued for the consistency of this account with a number of his remarks on art and related topics, such as

intuition, in his works beyond *Creative Evolution*, in particular his last major work, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. On this account, artworks are creations in a robust sense, being genuinely new additions to the world, with artists being taken to be expanding reality with their creations, both in terms of adding to the ‘furniture of the world’ with their works and expanding our capacities for consciousness, making both the universe and human thought and feeling richer.

Framed within Bergson’s philosophy of organic life, the account takes artworks not only to exhibit what Bergson calls a vital or willed order but to be close to, if not to partake in, the kind of organization that is found in organic forms, e.g., living beings. As such, artworks on this account are more than the external arrangement of their material parts and need to be understood in terms of duration—i.e., processually—rather than in spatial terms, e.g., as static and finished objects. It follows that what Bergson calls intelligence, or what we might call ‘analysis’, as a tendency to decompose phenomena into parts in order to understand them ‘from without’ as the assembly of these parts, is unsuited to fully and properly apprehending artworks *qua* creations. Instead, the mode of awareness that Bergson calls intuition, being a kind of ‘divining sympathy’ that apprehends phenomena ‘from within’, is needed for this, where this mode of awareness is exemplified by the kind of attention that artists pay to their subject matter and to their works while in progress.

This Bergsonian account of art not only suggests a way of reviving the fraught notion of ‘aesthetic experience’ by connecting it with intuition as distinct from our everyday or ‘normal’ perception, but it gives us an account that is broadly naturalistic without being physically reductive or materialist, positioning artistic creation as a microcosm of the biological creation of organisms and species through evolution and making art continuous with life. This offers another way for us to understand art in relation to evolution, and to our human form of life, as an alternative to the common, broadly Darwinian approach found in, e.g., Stephen Davies’s *The Artful Species* (2012), which aims to understand aesthetic taste and the drive to create art as evolutionary adaptations that developed or were retained for their survival value for humans as a

species. This type of evolutionary explanation risks reducing art and its value to something that is either instrumental, even if it does not serve an immediate practical purpose for us today, or arbitrary, being the bi-product of some other evolutionary adaptation that was retained only because it did not interfere with our species' survival.

In contrast, by taking artistic creation to be part of life's vital impetus toward the continual development and diversification of forms, and to expand our awareness beyond the utilitarian limits of intelligence to open up increasingly more comprehensive perspectives onto reality, the Bergsonian account has implications for art's moral and social value. What it suggests is that not only the creation of artworks, but the preservation and handing down to new audiences of artworks that, as organic unities, embody unique forms with unique values and so cannot be replaced by different works, is part of what Bergson conceives as life's efforts to keep the world dynamic and to oppose its fall into the stasis of repetition (cf. *CE*, 270-71). This positions art as a form of resistance to any merely habitual, mechanical, or rote way of thinking and acting, and so to closed rather than open forms of society and social arrangements, by injecting indeterminacy and dynamism into the world as part of the ascending movement of life and consciousness that Bergson associates with freedom (*Ibid.*, 245).

4. HOW CAN 'ENGAGED' ART BE EXISTENTIALLY AUTHENTIC? DE BEAUVOIR CONTRA SARTRE

4.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a critical examination of the account of engaged or committed literature¹ found in Jean-Paul Sartre's *What is Literature?* (1948; hereafter *WL*), both in relation to his existentialism, including his notions of freedom, authenticity, and bad faith, and in contrast to the view of literature held by Simone de Beauvoir. The engagement or commitment that is in question here is a social-political one: Sartre is concerned with how writing literature can be a way of actively engaging with the material and social conditions of one's lived situation and with how artists can contribute through their works to the political betterment of their age. Because of how he conceives the essence of literature, Sartre argues that writers have an obligation to be engaged in their works, where he takes this to be a matter of advocating for socially progressive positions and critiquing instances of oppression. Many of Sartre's remarks strongly imply that he requires *good* literature to be engaged in this way and that works that are not overly political or that endorse positions other than socialist ones will be bad *qua* literature.

While this account of what it is for literature to be engaged is the most prominent consistent position found in *What is Literature?*, Sartre also frequently makes claims that are in tension with this view and sometimes appear to contradict it. While these claims are not substantial or developed enough to be considered a second, alternate account of engaged literature, they are in line with de Beauvoir's positions on literature's nature, its value, and its relation to human

¹ Since the French '*engagée*' in Sartre's phrase '*littérature engagée*' has been translated into English as either 'committed' or 'engaged', I will use both terms synonymously here, though I generally favour talk of engagement.

freedom. One of the things I aim to show in this essay is how reading these remarks of Sartre's together with de Beauvoir's helps to develop an alternative to Sartre's more prominent account. I also aim to show that this alternative account of how literature can be engaged, and of its social, moral, and cognitive value, is more plausible than Sartre's, both on independent grounds and because it avoids certain problems that his main account faces: specifically, worries concerning his account's consistency, and whether what it calls for would lead authors into what Sartre calls 'bad faith', which, as the contrary of authenticity, could be considered the 'cardinal sin' of existentialism.²

Because Sartre and de Beauvoir both discuss literature, I will keep my focus on artworks that are, or that include, fictional narratives. However, my argument in favour of the conception of engaged art that can be found in de Beauvoir and that is implied in the remarks of Sartre that run counter to his main position could also be applied to artworks in other media and genres, albeit with modification depending on the characteristics of the medium or genre in question. Ultimately, I think that the question of the value of art in general—both in the sense of what makes a work good/better or bad/worse *qua* art, and why good art is valuable to create and to engage with as spectators, readers, listeners, etc.—is closely tied to the particular values that I argue obtain for engaged art on this second account.

In addition to developing those remarks of Sartre's that are in tension with his primary position and showing how they relate to, and can be supplemented by, de Beauvoir's remarks on literature, another reason for my focus in this essay is that the political content and perspectives of artworks and artists is a currently pressing issue in what Sartre would recognize as my own historical situation as an author, given rising concerns with social justice and resisting perceived oppression. In my experience, a view of what it is for art to be politically engaged that is very close to Sartre's primary account is often assumed by artists, critics, educators, and organizations that fund the arts, with the political or moral value of a work's 'message' often being taken to be

² Cf. Grene 1952 on the ethical role of authenticity in existentialist thought. See also de Beauvoir 1948 on how living an authentically human existence is an ethical matter.

synonymous with the work's *artistic* value, i.e., its goodness or badness *qua* art. If this way of thinking about art is flawed, as I argue it is, and if I am right that it is frequently assumed by contemporary artists and art critics, as well as by many of their audience members and readers, the problem I am concerned to address is not just internal to Sartre's thought but is part of how art and its value are currently understood. If there is a problem with the conception that artists and professional critics have of art, these practices are themselves likely to suffer: thus, while my primary focus here is on Sartre and de Beauvoir, my argument has implications for current discourses surrounding art practices and their relation to social-political issues.

Sections 4.2 and 4.3 explicate Sartre's accounts of human existence and freedom and of the nature of literature, respectively, including his account of engaged literature. In Sections 4.4 I consider two potential problems for Sartre's view: viz., the worry that his view might be internally inconsistent, and the worry that his view might be in bad faith. In Section 4.5 I turn to de Beauvoir and outline her view of literature and the cognitive and moral values it can realize when written authentically, which involves an alternative account of promoting freedom. In Section 4.6 I show that de Beauvoir's view is compatible with some of Sartre's better claims, which can be developed to give an account of art's potential social value and of what it is for art to be *authentically* engaged.

4.2 An Overview of Sartre's Existential Ontology and Account of Freedom

Sartre's *What is Literature?* was published initially as six articles in the journal *Les Temps modernes* that were then published together by Gallimard in 1948, with an English translation following two years later. In this work he discusses what writing—specifically, prose writing—is, why and for whom an author writes, and the situation that European writers were facing at the time. (The 1967 reprint of the English translation by Methuen contains an appendix, 'Writing for One's Age', that appeared in the June 1948 edition of *Les Temps modernes* but not in the original Gallimard edition.) Sartre's call for literature's engagement in the later chapters must be understood in relation to the theory of writing proposed in the first chapter, which in turn must be

understood in the context of the accounts of freedom and responsibility and the ontology of human existence that Sartre develops in his major work of existential phenomenology, *Being and Nothingness* (1943; hereafter *BN*).³

Sartre's account rests on a distinction between being in-itself (*en soi*) and being for-itself (*pour soi*). Unlike the rest of being—anything that in any sense *is*—, conscious beings, or beings who are aware of their own existence, exist in the mode of the for-itself. Not only are they self-conscious but they care about, can take a stand on, and interpret their existence. Everyone's life is an issue for them, in relation to which things take on meaning and value. And one's life is an issue not just in the sense of having a 'survival instinct' to want to continue living, but in the sense that *how* one's life goes will matter and will be the ultimate purpose for the sake of which particular projects are pursued, actions are taken and choices made, things are valued, etc.

Following Husserl, consciousness for Sartre is *intentional*, in the sense of always being consciousness *of* something toward which it is directed. Because intentional directedness is perspectival, conscious beings always occupy a perspective on the aspects of being they intend, i.e., their intentional objects. Perspectival consciousness not only intends objects but intends them *as* something-or-other, i.e., makes them *determinate* objects, which is to say that it 'discloses' being. For Sartre, this is how distinctions and meanings are introduced into existence. With somewhat dramatic phrasing, he says that consciousness makes distinctions by secreting its 'nothingness' into the world. Put more plainly, the idea is that any determination of something *as* something, and any distinction between it and other things, implies negation: something being an X entails that it is *not* a Y or a Z, and something being a distinct object means both that it is self-identical and that it is *not* identical to anything else.

For Sartre, the world of being-in-itself does not contain negation or absence; it is a plenum of mere undifferentiated *stuff* that he describes as superfluous (*de trop*) in the sense both of

³ The following summary is general enough to make it hard to give non-trivial references to specific places where Sartre makes these points. Interested readers are invited to consult the introduction, chapter two of part one, and the first section of the conclusion of *BN*. Also, the introduction to the excerpts from Sartre in *Existentialism: Basic Writings* (Guignon and Pereboom, eds., 2001, 255-75) presents a good overview of Sartre's account.

overflowing and of being contingent, having no reason for being other than that ascribed to it by consciousness. In order for consciousness to introduce nothingness into this world, Sartre argues that consciousness must at its core *be* the nothingness it ‘secretes’. Put less dramatically, the idea is that consciousness can never get behind itself to be aware of itself along with its intentional object: one can be *self*-conscious only by reflecting on aspects of what Sartre calls one’s ‘*facticity*’, e.g., one’s past actions and experiences and historical facts, or one’s present bodily condition and situation, by making these one’s intentional object. This self-reflection is itself an act of consciousness, with the ‘intender’ behind such an act remaining outside of consciousness itself, which is to say that in any conscious act, the consciousness ‘performing’ this act is never an object for itself, which is another way of saying that it is ‘no-thing’.⁴

This constitutes a double gap in the ontological structure of being-for-itself. Because consciousness needs to be distinct from the objects it intends in order to take up a perspective on them, there must be a gap between consciousness, or being-for-itself, and its actual or potential objects, which includes all of being-in-itself. This makes beings-for-themselves free from the causal determinacy and quantifiability that apply to beings in the mode of the in-itself. This freedom from determinism is part of what Sartre calls our ‘*transcendence*’, where this includes our *self*-transcendence. This involves a gap between who we have become at any particular moment in our existence and who we are ‘overall’, including who we *will* become as our lives unfold temporally and as we continue to develop through our choices and actions. At every moment and in every situation we will have a finite number of determinate factual characteristics, and there will be certain things that will either be true or false about our pasts and our social situatedness—one’s class, gender, race, and nationality, one’s occupation, one’s relations to others, e.g., being a mother or a friend, etc.—but we are never reducible or identical to these aspects of our facticity: as being-for-itself, we never *are* mothers or friends, men or women, rich or poor, etc. in the way that, say, a rock *is* a rock. This is what Sartre means by his seemingly paradoxical claim that we are what we are not and are not what we are (*BN*, 28).

⁴ This is similar to Hume’s argument that one never experiences one’s *self*: see Hume, 1740, I, IV, § VI.

Since the for-itself is not determined in its being, we *are* only what we make of ourselves through our actions and by how we disclose ourselves to ourselves in self-consciousness. For us, “existence precedes essence” (Sartre 1946, 20): what we are is not something given in advance that causes what we do; rather, who and what we are is shaped by, and follows from, our actions. For Sartre, what we do is always the result of a free choice, even if only insofar as we ‘choose’ it by not choosing to do otherwise: e.g., as long as suicide or passivity is an option, not choosing these means we have chosen whatever it is we do instead. This makes us radically responsible for our choices and actions, and insofar as what we *are* is formed by what we *do*, responsible for our very existence. Because consciously intending or disclosing things is something we do, even if not always deliberately, and because we are not limited in terms of what we disclose things as but can always conceive of them differently, we are similarly responsible for the meanings and values that things have for us. Without God to give us an essence and in the absence of a biologically or psychologically fixed ‘human nature’, we are left with no excuses.⁵

Bad faith is a matter of trying to avoid this responsibility for who we are, either by denying our radical freedom or by denying our past choices and current situatedness. This can be either a matter of denying our transcendence by identifying with some aspect of our facticity that we take to define our being in the manner of a fixed essence or to determine our choices and actions, or of denying our facticity by identifying with our transcendence as itself a kind of object or, as Sartre puts it, taking our being as for-itself in the manner of the in-itself. The first type of bad faith can be seen in the example of the waiter who identifies with his occupation, taking himself to *be* a waiter in the way a table *is* a table (BN, 102), while the second would be exemplified by

⁵ Along with *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre develops the consequences of our freedom for our responsibility for our actions, for ourselves, and ultimately for the world in *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1946); see especially 17-25. Although this text is not considered authoritative with respect to Sartre’s thought, since it is the transcription of a public lecture he gave and so does not contain the same level of precision and detail of his ideas during this period as does *Being and Nothingness*, I draw on it here because de Beauvoir edited the transcripts of the lecture for publication in Sartre’s absence and, it is thought, may have added some ideas of her own into the published text, even if only in the way in which certain ideas are phrased or explained. (On de Beauvoir’s influence on and contributions to ideas for which Sartre is known, see Daigle and Golomb, 2009.) As such, while it would not be authoritative to cite in a work focusing primarily on Sartre’s philosophy, it fits my purpose of presenting a general sketch of the ‘existentialist’ framework for the ideas of both Sartre and de Beauvoir that I discuss in this chapter.

someone who denies that their facticity characterizes who they are at all, e.g., by holding that they *are not* a waiter in the way that a table *is not* an inkwell (*Ibid.*, 103).

Although Sartre does not give us a worked-out account of *authenticity* as the opposite of bad faith, it is plausibly a matter of living and acting with an awareness of the kind of being one is as for-itself—i.e., of acknowledging ourselves as always both facticity and transcendence—and accepting and embracing our radical responsibility. For example, an authentic waiter might acknowledge that while this does not exhaust his identity, he ‘is’ a waiter in some sense, based on the position he occupies as the result of his past choices, and that this is contingent on his continuing to perform this role, with nothing determining how he will perform it or that he will continue to do so. One might also take authenticity to involve understanding oneself as a dynamic process of becoming, or in de Beauvoir’s phrase, “a constantly renewed upspringing that is opposed to the fixed reality of things” (de Beauvoir 1945, 212).

Now that Sartre’s account of human existence, freedom, and responsibility has been outlined, we can turn to his theory of literature and his call for its political engagement.

4.3 Sartre on Literature and the Writer’s Responsibility

Sartre begins to answer the question of what literature is by inquiring into the nature of writing and the written word. Unlike other arts such as painting or music, the materials with which writers work, i.e., words, are not themselves the focus of the aesthetic interest one takes in a novel or short story; rather, the meaning of the words are. While the colours used by painters and the sounds produced by musicians are things to be appreciated for themselves, words are *signs*: they refer to something beyond themselves, where their meaning lies in the things, people, events, etc. to which they refer (*WL*, 1-4). Or at least this is where the meaning lies in prose writing, in which words are used as signs. Any sign is, of course, also a thing, and Sartre distinguished prose from poetry on this basis: in the latter, words are treated as things, with poets and readers being interested less in their literal referents and more in their properties, e.g., how they sound when spoken aloud, the syllables and stresses they contain, their homonymous

resonances, etc. That is, in poetry words are opaque to the consciousness of both writer and reader (*Ibid.*, 5), but in prose words are “transparent” (*Ibid.*, 15), with writer and reader intending ‘through’ them to the things, events, and ideas they describe and to which, as signs, they point.

As such, prose is utilitarian, a means for communicating ideas, with this communication and not the words themselves being the end aimed at by the practice (*Ibid.*, 10). “The man who talks is beyond words and near the object,” Sartre writes, “whereas the poet is on this side of them” (*Ibid.*, 5), i.e., is focused on language rather than on the world to which language refers. This is why Sartre limits his notion of *littérature engagée* to prose, or communicative speech. Language, as a tool to communicate ideas, functions in the manner of other tools by extending our capacities to act. As Sartre puts it, for the prose writer, his words “are the prolongations of his meanings, his pincers, his antennae, his spectacles [...] he is surrounded by a verbal body which he is hardly aware of and which extends his action upon the world” (*Ibid.*, 6; see also 11). In this way, prose puts both the writer and the reader into contact with the world beyond language: it “tears him away from himself and throws him out into the world” (*Ibid.*, 7-8).

Another way to explain this distinction between prose and poetry is to note the difference in the criteria that prose writers will tend to employ when it comes to their selection of words and shaping of phrases in contrast with those employed by poets. Prose writers will choose words and structure sentences largely based on what will best convey the idea they want to get across. The aim is to say what one means, and words or phrases that do not contribute to this ought, on this standard, to be eliminated for the sake of concision: writers should, as Faulkner said, ‘kill their darlings’. Poets, on the other hand, will be concerned with more than the literal meaning of words and phrases. A different word with the same meaning will be just as good as its synonym for a prose writer, but for a poet a change in literal meaning might be less important than finding a word with a sibilant sound or a certain number of syllables, or one that begins with a particular letter, etc. This is what Sartre is getting at when he writes that for the prose writer, “it is not first of all a matter of knowing whether they please or displease in themselves, but whether they correctly indicate a certain thing or a certain notion” (*Ibid.*, 11).

To use words to communicate implies in principle an addressee, even if one's writing is never actually read by anyone else. Communicating with others, even if the writer is addressing a general audience rather than specific others, is a way of acting in and on the world through language insofar as these others are in the world alongside the writer. Thus, to write is to act (*Ibid.*, 12),⁶ over and above the actions of choosing the words that will express what one means and putting them down on paper. These actions are part of writing poetry as well, but prose writers also act in the sense of performing 'speech acts': in using prose, one "designates, demonstrates, orders, refuses, interpolates, begs, insults, persuades, insinuates", etc. (*Ibid.*, 10), where this is neither intrinsic to nor standard for poetry.

Most crucially, prose *discloses* the things, persons, events, etc. that it points to, with writing being "action by disclosure" (*Ibid.*, 13), portraying things from a perspective or under a certain aspect and as meaningful in some way. In an important passage, Sartre writes: "If you name the behaviour of an individual, you *reveal* it to him; he *sees* himself" (*Ibid.*, 12, my emphasis), where this also applies to naming, describing, or portraying objects or aspects of the world. Writing reveals the object to readers in a certain way, and so makes this way of 'seeing' available to them. Revealing a new way of seeing leads to change, not only in how the person to whom it is disclosed experiences it but in that person's behaviour in the world, insofar as how we conceive the things around us and the relations in which they stand to other things and to ourselves affects what we do with them. Continuing his example of a hitherto-unconscious aspect of someone's behaviour that is revealed by being named, Sartre asks: "After that, how can you expect him to act in the same way?" (*Ibid.*, 13).⁷

So, by describing or naming something one inevitably characterizes that thing in some way and communicates a view of it as having some meaning or value, where communicating this can change—specifically, by adding to—the ways in which one's readers think of, relate to, and value it themselves, and so can change how they act with respect to it. How one discloses the

⁶ Sartre's phrase is "To speak is to act" (*WL*, 12), but by 'speaking' here he means communicating in prose, whether in writing or by uttering words aloud.

⁷ On writing being an act of disclosure that reveals the world and things as meaningful, see *WL*, 26, 43-44.

things one describes can be more or less deliberate or self-aware, but any communicative use of language will still disclose in some way or other, with the choice to speak or write rather than remaining silent being one the author had made. Thus, for Sartre, a writer bears responsibility for the meanings she gives to things by writing about them, i.e., for how they are disclosed. This is not to say that writers must be sincere and should only characterize things as they believe them to be: one can, of course, be ironic, but one will still be responsible for presenting a view that one advances ironically or insincerely as a possible way to conceive of and value one's subject, even if one does not endorse that conception or those values oneself.

As explained above, Sartre takes consciousness's ability to disclose things in multiple ways—to interpret things and situations, including itself, differently—to be an essential part of its freedom. While, for him, our ontological freedom as beings-for-ourselves can never be negated, we can be alienated from it, e.g., in cases of bad faith where we identify with our facticity and deny our transcendence. By disclosing things and the world in new ways, revealing new perspectives along with new interpretations, writers exemplify humanity's freedom and show us ways in which the world can be meaningful. Thus, literature can liberate readers from alienation and promote their freedom (see Cate, 1967, p. ix), especially since reading is a creative act for Sartre, wherein the reader re-enacts the writer's speech acts for herself. When we read our own work, Sartre writes, "we create it again, we repeat mentally the operations which produced it" (*WL*, 28; see also 29-30). Thus, reading a text allows us mentally to go through the process of meaning-making by which it was produced, and so to re-think for ourselves what its author thought. "To write," then, "is to make an appeal to the reader that he lead into objective existence the revelation which I have undertaken by means of language" (*Ibid.*, 32).

Just as authors exercise their freedom in writing and so need not to be alienated, readers must be free in order to engage with what authors have written and re-create it in their imagination (*Ibid.*, 32-33). Sartre puts this by saying that the author needs to "address himself to the freedom of readers" so that they in turn "recognize his creative freedom" (*Ibid.*, 36). To do this, the author requires his readers to be free; thus, writing in any way that promotes readers'

alienation rather than their freedom is self-defeating. Sartre insists, moreover, that authors must write so as to actively promote their readers' freedom: "the end to which [prose] offers itself [as a means] is the reader's freedom" (*Ibid.*, 33). So, in his view, literature is characterized by two related aims, "both to disclose the world and to offer it as a task to the generosity [i.e., freedom] of the reader" (*Ibid.*, 43), with authors being obligated and responsible for both.

Two worries can be raised here, one about Sartre's distinction between poetry and prose and one about the question of disclosure and of literature's capacity to connect the reader to the world when the objects, people, and events disclosed are fictional. Regarding the first worry, one might object that the difference between poetry and prose as forms of writing is not as hard-and-fast as Sartre makes out. Even if poets are typically more concerned with properties of words than prose writers are, with different criteria for selecting and arranging words, it does not mean they do not also aim to communicate ideas and never perform speech acts such as asserting, interrogating, confessing, pleading, etc. through their poetry. Likewise, prose writers can also attend to the visual or sonic qualities of words and choose them not only in order to communicate ideas but for reasons of style, even if this is a secondary concern. And while poems typically involve more linguistic self-reflexivity by foregrounding aspects of the words they contain, they can also disclose objects or the world as meaningful in certain ways: Shakespeare's sonnets, for instance, disclose various aspects of the phenomenon and experience of love.

Even if his distinction between poetry and prose is not tenable, it does not pose a problem for Sartre's position that literature can and ought to be engaged. If poetry can disclose things as well as prose can, it only shows that what Sartre says about a writer's responsibility can apply to poetry as well.⁸ This leads us to rethink what Sartre means by 'poetry' and 'prose' if his distinction does not plausibly map on to the kinds of writing to which these terms are typically applied. It suggests that Sartre employs them not in their ordinary sense, but as technical terms

⁸ Christina Howells argues that Sartre came to accept that non-utilitarian or 'pure' art—i.e., an art concerned more with 'form' than 'content'—can also be committed, where this can be seen in his changed position on Flaubert, whom he first condemns for a supposed lack of engagement and for anti-socialist views (*WL*, 92-93), but whom he later counts as a kind of engaged writer in *The Family Idiot* (1971-72). On this, see Howells 1978, esp. 178-81.

for ways of using language. This can be seen in his claim that what he means by prose “is first of all an attitude of mind” (*Ibid.*, 11), i.e., one of ‘intending’ the world *through* language, and so by ‘prose’ and ‘poetry’ we can take him to mean ways of approaching and relating to language as ‘transparent’ or ‘opaque’, respectively. Hence, a line in what would ordinarily be called a poem that is written to communicate an idea about some object, with little emphasis on the words themselves, would count as a line of ‘prose’ in Sartre’s technical sense.

As for the worry about how Sartre’s theory will apply to fiction, one might think that if the objects—characters, settings, events, etc.—that words refer to are fictional, language could no longer be said to put the writer and reader into contact with the actual world rather than an imaginary one. It becomes less obvious how an author could disclose anything about the non-fictional world by writing about fictional characters and events, since whatever is communicated about these characters or events might only apply within the bounds of the fiction. A film of a botched robbery, for instance, may communicate perspectives on loyalty, greed, self-interest, etc., and while the story may show these perspectives to be true within the fictional world—e.g., maybe there really is honour among thieves *in the fiction*—there is no reason to take the story to reveal anything that holds true of any actual person, their behaviour and motivations, or the meanings or values that actual actions and events can have in the world outside the fiction.

This would be a problem if Sartre thought that literature conveyed propositional truths about the world, but his concern is with how it conveys perspectives—i.e., ways of conceptualizing, interpreting, and valuing—where a perspective towards a fictional object can also in principle be taken towards non-fictional ones. Fictional entities or events are instances of general kinds that also have instances in the non-fictional world, and so these kinds can be said to ‘be’ in the world. In leading the reader to imagine things about an instance of a kind, a text also has the reader imagine something about the kind.⁹ This is because we understand particulars in terms of kinds or categories, with every new experience of something that we take to belong to a category

⁹ For the view that fictions prescribe the readers to imagine what is true in the fiction, see Walton 1990, 39. Most contemporary philosophers of fiction endorse this view, but see Matravers 2014 for a dissenting view. Nothing of Sartre’s view of literature hinges on Walton being right, so it is not threatened by Matravers’s opposing argument.

potentially adding to or modifying our conception of that category. Sartre is getting at this when he writes that “[j]ust as one perceives things only against the background of the *world*, so the objects represented by art appear *against the background of the universe*” (*Ibid.*, 40-41, my emphasis). That is, we understand objects represented in fictional works as possible instances of kinds that we have concepts of through our familiarity with some of their actual instances.

Since what is disclosed through the portrayal of a fictional object can pertain to the kind of which it is an instance, if the kind is a part of the actual world then the fiction *does* disclose an aspect of this world and not just of the fictional one. A portrayal of a fictional action as generous or brave does not show that there actually are generous or brave people or actions, but it does demonstrate ways of being generous or brave, where this can add to how a reader conceives of generosity or bravery. Moreover, portraying an event or character in a certain way—as having some value or meaning, etc.—discloses a way in which things of that kind can be understood or valued. Representing a robbery as admirably brave reveals how such activities *can* be seen as brave and how one *might* admire their participants.

Thus, works of fiction can disclose aspects of the world to readers, and they depend on the freedom of their readers in order for the author’s ideas to be re-created in the readers’ imaginations. In both cases an author will be responsible for their choice of what to write—and their choice to write at all—and so will be responsible for what their writing discloses about its subject-matter, e.g., for the ways of interpreting or valuing that it shows to be possible. Broadly speaking, what Sartre calls engagement or commitment has to do with the writer accepting this responsibility. But what exactly does this involve?

4.3.1 Engaged Art as Disclosing Social Problems

Since Sartre advocates for writers to engage with their social and historical circumstances, it is useful and appropriate to consider his own context and what he was aiming at by writing, i.e., what change he hoped his writing would help bring about. The war, the Nazi occupation of France, and the resistance, as well as French colonialism and the class struggles of the time, were

important elements of this context and contributed to Sartre's concern with freedom. *What is Literature?* was written against the backdrop of the prosecution of French authors who had collaborated with the occupation, with some being sentenced to death for their involvement, which publicly raised the question of what specific responsibilities, if any, they held as writers (see Sapiro 2006, 40-41). As Gisèle Sapiro recounts, some of these writers denied that they were responsible, appealing to an art-for-art's-sake view of literature to contest the claim that what they wrote committed them politically. However, at least two accused authors, Robert Brasillach and Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, accepted their responsibility *qua* writers—the former during his 1945 trial at which he was condemned to death and the latter prior to his suicide a few weeks after—and so became “the negative figures in relation to whom Sartre elaborates his definition of the social role of the writer” (*Ibid.*, 41).

This suggests that Sartre sought to condemn these authors' failures to engage with the conditions of their fellow French under the occupation and how they either used their writing to support the occupation and its values, whether directly or indirectly, or made no mention of this situation as it was occurring. This further suggests that for Sartre, engaged literature is writing that *does not* remain silent on pressing issues in an author's factual (political, historical, etc.) situation but instead addresses these issues, and not simply by mentioning or describing them but specifically by disclosing them *as* problems, i.e., by naming what is problematic about them and taking a stance against them. So understood, Sartre is not just offering a theory of what literature is but of what *good* literature is, insofar as arguing that authors *ought* to write in a certain way presents a view of how literature *ought* to be written, where such a view seems equivalent to a view of what constitutes good literature: viz., that literature (and by extension, art) is good *qua* literature (or art) to the extent that it raises awareness of and critiques social problems, and bad *qua* literature (or art) if it does not.

This view of good literature as needing to be politically engaged, and of political quietism making a work worse *qua* literature, is easy to attribute to Sartre based on what he writes and has been noted by others. Charles Whiting, for instance, takes Sartre to be saying that any “novel

should imply corrective measures for the solution of current social and political problems” (Whiting 1948, 84), while Iris Murdoch writes that Sartre “makes the connexion [sic] of ‘good writing’ with ideological commitment” (Murdoch 1953, 112). Much of *What is Literature?* supports this view, and moreover requires *good* literature’s ideological commitments specifically to be socialist and progressive, and in some passages explicitly Marxist, though he is careful to point out that he is not calling for the sort of social realist art promoted by the Soviet Union.

This Marxist orientation can be seen in his discussion of the development of French literature from the seventeenth to the twentieth century considered in relation to the class interests of the nobility, the bourgeoisie, and the proletariat. According to Sartre, in the seventeenth century an author’s readership was to be found in the upper classes and the nobility, with literature serving the interests of this audience by promoting and maintaining the values of this class. “The authors of the seventeenth century,” he writes, “had a definite function because they addressed an enlightened, strictly limited, and active public which exercised permanent control over them. Unknown by the people [i.e., the lower classes], their job was to reflect back its own image to the *élite* which supported them” (*WL*, 67, original emphasis). In the eighteenth century, with the displacement of the aristocracy by the bourgeoisie, literature came to serve the interests of this newly dominant class—or so Sartre’s story goes—with writers acting as the ‘bad consciousness’ of the nobility but failing to give their bourgeois readers “a clearer class consciousness” of themselves (*Ibid.*, 78). By not also acting as *their* ‘bad consciousness’, limiting their critiques of oppression to that of the old nobility without raising awareness of the bourgeoisie’s own oppression of the masses, literature became the ‘good consciousness’ of this now-dominant class, maintaining their values and implicitly their ideology and thereby becoming complicit in their oppression of the proletariat (*Ibid.*, 82-85, 177-78).

Whether or not this is accurate as history, it reveals Sartre’s concern with literature as a means not only of raising awareness of social conditions in which people are living at a certain time but of giving readers the right sort of ‘class consciousness’ with the aim of inspiring concrete actions to change said conditions. Moreover, Sartre’s faulting of authors *qua* authors for

not “giving [their] readers a clearer class consciousness” (*Ibid.*, 78) shows that this is something he thinks authors *ought* to do, and hence that he takes the value of literature to be tied to its use as such a means. This can also be seen from other passages (e.g., *Ibid.*, 86-87) where he implies that *good* writers will make their works reflect the social order of their era instead of focusing on the psychology and experiences of individuals. That Sartre aims for literature’s consciousness-raising to inspire changes in actual social conditions is made explicit when he states that “writing conceived as a concrete and historical phenomenon [...] want[s] the material improvement of [the proletariat’s] lot, and ... the end of man’s exploitation by man” (*Ibid.*, 90), and when he contends that a writer’s strength “lies in his *direct action upon the public*, in the anger, the enthusiasm, and the reflections which he stirs up by his writings” (*Ibid.*, 141, my emphasis), and goes on to declare that “our writings would have no meaning if we did not set up as our goal the eventual coming of freedom by means of socialism” (*Ibid.*, 211).

Further support for this view can be found throughout *What is Literature?* but there is only room here to note some of the more telling remarks. For instance, Sartre defines a bad novel as one that “approves or accepts *or simply abstains from condemning* the subjection of man by man” (*Ibid.*, 45, my emphasis), with the implication that a novel is good only if it actively condemns this. He goes on to state that “the essence of the art of writing” involves “clarifying and supporting the claims of the proletariat” and that, as such, writers must think of themselves as “united with the oppressed masses by a solidarity of interests” (*Ibid.*, 110). Similar claims are easy to find, e.g., that writers, “by the subject of [their] writing,” should “direct [the reader’s] attention upon ... the oppressed of the world” (*Ibid.*, 204); that writers “must militate, in [their] writings, in favour of the freedom of the person *and the socialist revolution*” (*Ibid.*, 205, my emphasis); and that writers not only should present solutions for social problems, but that those “which are not rigorously inspired by socialist principles” are to be rejected (*Ibid.*, 206).

The view that a work’s artistic value—e.g., a novel’s literary quality—depends on or is reducible to the perceived value of its political perspective, whether this perspective is explicit or implicit, is at the heart of what has been called orthodox Marxist aesthetics. In *The Aesthetic*

Dimension (1978; hereafter *AD*), Herbert Marcuse outlines the six core theses of this theory, where versions of the second, third, and fourth theses are expressed in or presupposed by many of Sartre's claims. As formulated by Marcuse (*AD*, 2), these are that:

2. There is a definite connection between art and social class. The only authentic, true, progressive art is the art of the ascending class. It expresses the consciousness of this class.
3. Consequently, the political and the aesthetic, the revolutionary content and the artistic quality tend to coincide.
4. The writer has an obligation to articulate and express the interests and needs of the ascending class. (In capitalism, this would be the proletariat.)

These four theses are not necessarily tied to Marxism—except perhaps for the parenthetical remark about capitalism and the proletariat—but are compatible with other political theories.¹⁰ However, because of Sartre's commitment to Marxism in the period when he wrote *What is Literature?*, it is safe to read his claims as expressing this commitment. Moreover, Sartre does not simply endorse the fourth thesis but goes further, holding authors equally obligated to refrain from writing what might seem like 'apolitical' literature of psychological rather than sociological interest, and from dealing with characters' personal problems without tying them into the political problems of her or his society.

Even if art can raise awareness of social problems and endorse social change, and even if the effects of a given work are politically progressive or morally positive, the question remains: why think that a work will be more *artistically* valuable, i.e., good or better *qua* art, as a result? For what Marcuse calls orthodox Marxist aesthetics, the reduction of artistic to political value is grounded in the positioning of art on the side of the social 'superstructure', seeing artworks as

¹⁰ They may not even be necessary for a committed Marxist to endorse. As Marcuse notes, the position he calls 'orthodox Marxist aesthetics' that endorses these theses arguably "does not do justice to the views of Marx and Engels" on art and literature (*AD*, 11), and he cites Hans-Dietrich Sander (1970) for the view that, for Marx and Engels, "the essence of a work of art [is] precisely not in its political or social relevance" (Sander 1970, 174). See also Marx and Engels (1973) for a view of art that's closer to Kant's or Schiller's than to the views of Marxist theorists such as Brecht, Lukács, Berger, etc. Marcuse himself shows how one can be committed to Marxism as a socio-political theory without endorsing these theses.

part of a culture's ideology (cf. *AD*, 1, 12-15). If artworks are manifestations of ideology—with traditional views of aesthetic or artistic value as distinct from political value being dismissed as forms of 'false consciousness'—then the identification of an artwork's positive value with the degree to which it is revolutionary or counteractive to the dominant ideology follows. But, likely because he wants to avoid Marxism's historical determinism due to the incompatibility with his existentialist notion of consciousness's radical freedom, Sartre does not ground the link between engagement and artistic value and his claims about the writer's responsibility in the idea of a 'superstructure' that is determined by a 'base' of material conditions which in turn determines how these conditions are understood, so this answer is not available to him.

Instead, Sartre aims to ground his position in the nature of literature itself. He claims there is an "internal relationship between the demands of the lower classes and the principles of the art of writing" (*Ibid.*, 91), where unsurprisingly this relationship has to do with freedom. As a medium of communication, literature allows authors to disclose aspects of the world through their writing. In order to disclose some part of being, one's consciousness must be free in the sense that it is able to go beyond received ideas and fixed or habitual ways of experiencing and understanding what one is disclosing, in order to take up a new conceptual, perceptual, or emotional perspective on it. And in order to communicate this new perspective, language must be free to describe things in multiple ways, e.g., through new metaphors, while remaining comprehensible, rather than being limited to a finite number of descriptions already on hand.

This is what Sartre calls literature's formal autonomy (cf. *Ibid.*, 113), or its freedom from being fully determined by the situation of the author within which a literary work is produced. However, more than this formal autonomy is needed for literature to realize its essence. Communication is a two-way process that requires understanding on the part of those addressed as well as an utterance addressed to them by a speaker or writer (cf. *Ibid.*, 111-12). Thus, just as writers must be free in their consciousness of the world and in their use of language to communicate what they disclose through this consciousness, readers must be free in order to grasp the new perspectives the author's work conveys. This capacity for free understanding is

part of the ‘transcendence’ humans have *qua* beings-for-themselves in Sartre’s ontology, and while for Sartre this is an inherent condition of personhood that can never be fully negated, one can nevertheless be alienated from one’s freedom, e.g., in conditions of social oppression or in the form of ‘bad faith’ wherein one identifies with one’s facticity.

Sartre’s argument for the necessity of engaged writing can be summarized as follows. Because writing requires an audience and *free*, i.e., disclosive, writing requires the freedom of this audience as well as of the author, and because oppressive conditions limit freedom, anything that contributes to such conditions works against an end that is internal to literature. And, since *not* speaking out against a problem in one’s social circumstances counts for Sartre as endorsing it, any literature that is *not* overtly committed to advocating for concrete social freedoms and opposing oppression works against its nature *qua* literature, and so counts as bad literature. This is why Sartre writes that “there is a coincidence not only between formal freedom of thought and political democracy, but also between the material obligation of choosing man as a perpetual subject of meditation and social democracy” (*Ibid.*, 110), and why he insists that a literary work, to be good *qua* literature, ought to be engaged in the promotion of social freedom.¹¹

4.4 Problems with Sartre’s View

If the argument above—which has been reconstructed from several remarks that Sartre makes throughout the third chapter of *What is Literature?* (see especially *WL*, 51-52, 91-92, 111-13)—is his justification for making artistic value dependent on political value, flaws in this argument will weaken Sartre’s call for literature’s engagement. Without some intrinsic connection between literature and social freedom, and without appealing to something like the orthodox Marxist reduction of art to ideology, it would not be clear why a work is worse, *qua* literature, for not explicitly endorsing freedom or engaging with the social problems of its day, even if we might

¹¹ In places his position seems to be even stronger than this, with written works being required to promote freedom in order to count as literature at all; see, e.g., *WL*, 73 on eighteenth century religious literature—“by ceasing to be a free appeal to free men, *it was ceasing to be literature*” (my emphasis).

still hold an author generally blameworthy as a person, but not specifically as an author, for remaining silent when there might have been an opportunity to do good.

Unfortunately for Sartre, his argument has two apparent flaws: one is that his account is arguably inconsistent, and one is that the account involves a form of what he calls ‘bad faith’, which is a problem for the argument’s success according to Sartre’s own commitments.

4.4.1 Is Sartre’s Account Internally Consistent?

Iris Murdoch raises problems for Sartre’s argument and for the overall consistency of his position. For one thing, she notes that if disclosure or communication is taken to require both the speaker’s and addressee’s freedom, and if the speaker is therefore obliged to promote freedom through what is disclosed or communicated, it is not clear why *all* art and *all* forms of discursive communication would not also have the same obligation (Murdoch 1953, 115). It is implausibly strong to hold that all communication must confront and critique social oppression and explicitly promote human freedom, or else it is flawed *as speech*, and Murdoch takes it to be similarly implausible to require that works of literature do these things, even if literature depends on its readers’ freedom in the way Sartre describes.

For another, Murdoch suggests that Sartre’s account might conflate two notions of freedom, and also two ways in which literature connects one to the world. The latter conflation concerns the point about language being a tool for communication with words being signs, i.e., means to refer to objects in the world. As discussed above, Sartre takes this referential function of language to entail that literature connects authors and readers to the world, and Murdoch notes that he uses this “to support his contention that prose literature is naturally and properly ‘committed’” (*Ibid.*). The possible conflation here is between language ‘engaging’ the author and reader in the world in the sense of connecting them to it, and a literary work being ‘engaged’ in the sense of addressing or taking a stand on specific elements in the world to which it is so connected, e.g., social problems. We might also suspect a conflation between the sense in which literature could be said to ‘commit’ the reader to the world by referring to it, insofar as this leads

the reader to consciously intend this world, and a specifically social or political sense of ‘commitment’, i.e., an obligation to make an effort to solve these problems.

The other possible conflation that Murdoch notes is between the notions of freedom that are involved in the claims that (i) “the proper activity of the prose writer is to invite a free and selfless response from his reader” and (ii) that literature is required “to commend the cause of freedom for all mankind” (*Ibid.*). If the sort of freedom that literature appeals to in its readers is the ontological freedom of being-for-itself or what Sartre calls literature’s *formal* autonomy, it does not obviously follow that literary works, in their narrative *content*, must discuss and endorse freedom from social oppression in order to be good *qua* literature.¹² In particular, it is not clear why an explicit condemnation of oppression in a story, or a positive representation of freedom, counts as inviting a free response from readers any more than other kinds of content would, or, moreover, why other narrative content not explicitly promoting social freedom or condemning social oppression would fail to invite this response. As Murdoch notes, there is “no reason to prefer one sort of artistic subject-matter to another” when it comes to addressing one’s writing to the ontological freedom of one’s readers, and that “to suggest that ... there is a contradiction involved in lending one’s imagination (as author or spectator) to a work which approves of tyranny is to lean too heavily upon the word ‘freedom’” (*Ibid.*, 116; cf. *WL*, 46).

While Murdoch does not take this worry further, one could ask why concrete political or social freedom is needed for a reader to have the sort of free response to a work that Sartre requires. If, according to Sartre, we are always ontologically free and can never be unfree but only alienated from our freedom, then, in order to maintain that readers who are alienated due to social oppression will be unable to respond in the way that literature requires, one would have to presuppose that oppressive social conditions will alienate a person *entirely* so that she is no longer able to realize *any* of her ontological freedom. If alienation is always only partial, it is unclear why a reader in oppressive conditions could not be receptive to a work’s appeal to her

¹² That Sartre is concerned with a commitment to freedom at the level of a work’s content—i.e., the events and actions depicted, the perspectives it represents and endorses, etc.—is clear from certain of his remarks, e.g., his contention that he has “never spoken of anything but the content” of literature in his call for engagement (*WL*, 15).

ontological freedom, and why she would not be able to understand the new perspective that the work discloses and communicates.

If Sartre conflates two senses of the word ‘freedom’ here, and also conflates two ways in which literature could be said to be ‘engaged’ with the world, his argument would seem to be internally inconsistent. Also, it can be noted that in places Sartre appears to presuppose that readers must *already* be free from social oppression in order to respond to the appeal to their freedom that literature makes. This can be seen in his insistence that authors should promote social freedom because they need readers to be socially free and that because their works, as language, aim to communicate to a universal reader or an ‘every-person’ rather than to specific individual others, they should want the widest possible audience and hence should aim at universal social freedom (see *WL*, 49). And it is especially evident in his remarks to the effect that it is only in a classless society that literature can fully realize its essence as universal communication that appeals to, and can be received by, the freedom of all (*Ibid.*, 116, 177).

This leads to another inconsistency: if ‘real’ literature is possible only in a classless society in which everyone is free from alienation and so can be part of the audience to whose freedom an author needs to appeal, the works in which authors need to aim to bring about these conditions cannot themselves count as ‘real’ literature; but once the conditions in which literature can realize its ‘essence’ are achieved, there would seem to be no need for it to address and critique social oppression and to promote human freedom, since these issues will no longer be problems. Thus, if literature can only realize its essence in a classless society, it cannot be part of its essence that it explicitly addresses social problems and advocates for concrete conditions that promote human freedom. Rather, what Sartre seems to be urging authors to produce is a kind of propaganda designed to motivate readers to work against oppression in order that his ideal of ‘real’ literature can become possible. However, this is in tension with his repeated insistence that committed literature is not propaganda (see, e.g., *WL*, 153, 198, 220).

A related worry is that this limits literature’s liberatory potential as it seems to preclude literature from itself being able to combat readers’ alienation, leaving it to appeal to those who

are less oppressed to try to get them to act, outside of the realm of literature, to reduce the conditions of *others'* alienation. Literature's potential to enhance and promote freedom would be greater if it could communicate by appealing to the inherent freedom that even an alienated reader will have as a being-for-itself, and thereby work to counteract this alienation, making readers more aware of their inherent freedom through the very act of disclosing new perspectives without requiring them already to be non-alienated in order to be receptive. This is what Ralph Waldo Emerson is getting at when he writes in his essay "The Poet" that artists "are free ... and make free" (Emerson 1844, 301), and there is no reason why Sartre could not accept this instead of the presupposition noted above, since it is compatible with his broader account of human consciousness and freedom while allowing for the intrinsic connection between literature and freedom that he wants to maintain.

These apparent inconsistencies in Sartre's position and his argument in support of it are instances of a greater tension in Sartre's thought at the time he wrote *What is Literature?* between the existentialist position he developed in *Being and Nothingness* with its view of radical freedom and his political commitment to Marxism with its historical determinism and its view of most peoples' beliefs, thoughts, and actions being caused by material conditions and social forces, or what Marx calls 'ideology'. The notions that literature ought to combat oppression and that people can only truly be free in a classless society are influenced by Marx, but the view of literature as the free disclosure of new meanings and perspectives and the notion that it appeals to readers' freedom in communicating with them align more with existentialism. Sartre struggled in his later life to reconcile these two sets of ideas,¹³ and if he succeeded it was not until after *What is Literature?* was written, in his *Search for a Method* (1957) and *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960).

As previously noted, there are a number of remarks to be found in *What is Literature?* that are in tension with the account of engaged literature that is most prominent and most coherently

¹³ For an early attempt to show that existentialism is compatible with socialist politics and Marxist principles, see Sartre 1946.

developed, which could be seen as a further internal inconsistency. These remarks will be discussed in below in connection with the alternative account of literature found in de Beauvoir, with which Sartre's 'outlier' remarks are compatible. But first I want to note another problem for Sartre's account on his own standards, which is that literary engagement, understood as explicated above, arguably leads to what he calls 'bad faith'.

4.4.2 Is Sartre's Account in Bad Faith?

Bad faith is usually understood as a form of self-deception about one's own being, involving identifying as one's facticity or transcendence while denying the other, but this is not the only way that Sartre thinks a person can be in bad faith: certain of his examples show that he takes bad faith to be possible in relation to the being of others, conceiving of and relating *to them* as either pure facticity or pure transcendence. The former—reducing another to her or his facticity—can be considered a form of objectification insofar as it takes someone *to be*, say, their class, race, gender, occupation, etc. in the manner of the in-itself, i.e., a thing that has this characteristic as part of its essence, where this determines how they will be and what they will do. An example would be taking a person to be 'a blonde' or 'a nerd' and thinking that anything about them follows from this. Treating another as pure transcendence, on the other hand, might involve trying to ease someone's worries by telling them not to be affected by their circumstances, or trying to encourage someone by telling them they can do or be anything they want, where such empty advice overlooks how actions, feelings, and possibilities are always conditioned and limited—though never determined—by facticity.

That Sartre thinks we can be in bad faith about others and not only ourselves is seen in his examples of the woman on a date (*BN*, 96-98) and the closeted homosexual, or rather the friend who wants him to admit to being a homosexual (*Ibid.*, 107-09). In the woman's case, her bad faith includes her attempt to withdraw from or deny part of her own factual situation, but another part of her bad faith involves her thinking of her suitor in terms of fixed qualities. While his behaviour may be sincere or respectful, her taking *him to be* "sincere or respectful as the table

is round or square” (*Ibid.*, 97), attributing these qualities to him and not just to his actions, counts as bad faith on her part towards him: it involves her “project[ing] the strict present of the qualities into the temporal flux” (*Ibid.*), which takes his being to be fixed in the mode of the in-itself, effectively denying that ‘what’ he is will surpass any determinate qualities.

In the case of the homosexual, the bad faith exhibited by the friend whom Sartre calls the ‘champion of sincerity’ is clearly an instance of bad faith regarding another’s being. By urging his friend to admit to being a homosexual in light of his desires and sexual history, the champion of sincerity “demands ... that he constitute himself as a thing” (*Ibid.*, 108). Sartre asks “Who can not see how offensive to the Other and how reassuring for me is a statement such as ‘He’s just a [homosexual]’” (*Ibid.*). This suggests that we might be inclined to be in bad faith about others because regarding them as definable and their behaviour as determinable—and so, perhaps, more easily predictable and controllable—lets us feel more secure in our interactions with them, seeing them as manageable, if only for our understanding, in ways that a free being will not be. “The champion of sincerity,” Sartre concludes, “is in bad faith to the degree that in order to re-assure himself, he pretends to judge, to the extent that he demands that freedom as freedom constitute itself as a thing” (*Ibid.*, 109).

So, for Sartre, to regard others as ‘tokens’ of some ‘type’, and hence as definable and explainable in terms of one or more static factual properties, is to regard them in the manner of the in-itself and so puts one into bad faith towards them. For example, conceiving of people in terms of their membership in a social group—e.g., their race, class, gender, etc.—and taking their words and actions to be products of social ‘laws’ or forces, or to express the group’s perspective rather than their own as particular consciousnesses, reduces them to their membership in this group or category and is bad faith, even when the intention is to diagnose and critique forms of oppression that are themselves based on reducing others to this factual quality. Since Sartre’s account of engaged literature calls for writers to do this in their treatment of the characters and dramatic conflicts in their narratives, it follows that engaged literature, so understood, leads to and promotes bad faith, which can be seen from several parts of Sartre’s

account. Most striking is his call for “[e]ach character [to] be nothing but the choice of an issue and [to] equal no more than the chosen issue” during his discussion of what he calls a “theatre of situations” as opposed to a “theatre of characters” (*WL*, 217).¹⁴ Writing that he hopes “*all literature* will become moral and problematic like this new theatre” (*Ibid.*, my emphasis)—where he likely has Brechtian theatre in mind—shows that he takes the reduction of fictional persons to social issues—or specifically, their reduction to the social types they are taken to exemplify, where the issues in question are understood as conflicts between these types—to be the model for how fictional narratives can be socially engaged.¹⁵

This makes sense of his claim that Vercors’ novel *The Silence of the Sea*, with its ‘realistic’ or psychologically nuanced portrayal of characters on both sides of the war, “lost its effectiveness” in 1942 when France and Germany were in active combat, since what was “necessary” at that moment was to present the characters and sides of the conflict in simplified terms—e.g., the German soldier as brutish, the French soldier as noble, etc.—so that readers could “be either for them or against them” (*Ibid.*, 53-54). In other words, Sartre sees a commitment to human freedom in this situation as calling for characters to be portrayed in such a way that readers can easily take them in the manner of determinable things rather than persons or beings-for-themselves who will always be more than any type or category in which they might be classified. And the fact that the ‘persons’ here are fictional does not preclude such a treatment of them from counting as bad faith towards others, since, as explained above, fictional or purely imaginary events and characters still refer to some aspect of the non-fictional world and disclose it, i.e., present it in a certain way. Even if characters are not actual people and so are not beings-for-themselves, they are still depictions of persons and so present an image of humanity through which an author can disclose some aspect of humanity. Characters that are determinable or that exist in the manner of the in-itself will present an image of humanity as being similarly determinable and reducible to factual elements, where this is what is in bad faith.

¹⁴ Compare this with his call for writers *not* to focus on the psychology and ‘subjective’ experience of their characters (*WL*, 86-87).

¹⁵ A similar call for the reduction of characters to social types can be seen in his remarks on Maupassant (*WL*, 104).

It is not only a work's characters towards whom engaged literature, as Sartre understands it, will be in bad faith. By assuming that readers will fall into certain demographics based on factors like class or race, and that how they will experience and respond to a work—what they can understand of the perspectives it discloses, how it will appeal to them, etc.—will be limited based on such factors, Sartre risks identifying readers with these elements of their facticity and so being in bad faith towards them. When discussing the author Richard Wright, for example, Sartre claims that his novels address only specific types of readers, viz., “the cultivated negroes of the North and the white Americans of goodwill” (*Ibid.*, 58), and that they will be understood by readers of each type in different ways: he writes that black readers will understand more immediately because they will share the same experience but that white readers will understand more abstractly, “only by an extreme stretch of the imagination and by relying upon analogies” (*Ibid.*). While it seems true that what individual readers will get out of the experience of reading a novel will be partly based on the hermeneutic ‘horizon’ each brings to their reading, which includes their past experiences and where aspects of their facticity will factor in in some way and to some extent, Sartre risks bad faith by asserting not just that each reader will understand the work in the context of their own personality and past experience, but that there is *a* context in which black readers, *qua* black, will understand it, *a* context in which white readers will *qua* white, etc. (*Ibid.*, 59), with similar assumptions being made with regard to class when Sartre talks of works addressing a bourgeois or a proletarian audience (*Ibid.*, 74, 92-93, 110).¹⁶

By holding that authors should explicitly address social problems and endorse progressive political solutions as a way of motivating concrete social change, Sartre risks reducing literature to propaganda, despite claims of wanting to avoid this (*WL*, 198, 220). Sartre assumes here that readers can be influenced in this way, and that writers can aim to bring about predetermined ends

¹⁶ Sartre's suggestion that African-American authors can only write literature that addresses racial politics similarly risks being in bad faith: “if an American negro finds that he has a vocation as a writer, he discovers his subject at the same time. He is the man ... each of whose books will show the alienation of the black race within American society” (*WL*, 57). This denies black authors the imaginative freedom to write about other subject-matter, limiting them to expressing this one aspect of their facticity. However, while this might show bad faith on Sartre's part, it is separate from the question of how engaged literature, understood in a certain way, might itself promote bad faith.

by using their writing as a means, but this is also bad faith insofar as it takes readers' thoughts, feelings, and actions to be causally determinable such that one could find, in advance, the right means to cause certain desired changes in their behaviour. Rather than trying to appeal to readers by expressing why one thinks some social condition is problematic and leaving it up to them to agree or to take action, Sartre's call for writers to *make* their readers adopt certain interpretations and judgments of social issues overlooks readers' autonomy as disclosers of being for themselves.

This treatment of the reader as one whose consciousness can and should be determined is explicit in Sartre's claim that in good literature the reader "will be *led by the hand* until he is *made to see* that, in effect, what he wants is to eliminate the exploitation of man by man" (*Ibid.*, 204, my emphasis). This not only contradicts Sartre's claims not to be calling for literature to be used as propaganda—e.g., the claim that "in no case can I address myself to his passiveness, that is try to *affect* him, to communicate to him, from the very first, emotions of fear, desire, or anger" (*Ibid.*, 34)—but it runs up against Sartre's insistence that it is contradictory to try to fight oppression by means that limit or deny human freedom (*Ibid.*, 213). Treating readers as beings who can be *led* to think or want certain things, or as members of demographics that can be appealed to and who will think, feel, and react *as* members of their social groups, furthers the kind of thinking that makes social oppression possible in the first place which is to regard others as objects rather than persons. To the extent that Sartre's idea of committed literature does this, it promotes bad faith and so is 'inauthentic', which is a problem insofar as denying readers' transcendence is inconsistent with Sartre's claim that engaged literature must be the act of "a free man addressing free men" and his insistence that "any attempt to enslave his readers" will threaten a writer's commitment to promoting freedom (*Ibid.*, 46).

This tension between remarks that promote, or are in, bad faith and those that characterize the writer's commitment to freedom in terms of an appeal to the transcendence of readers and characters occurs throughout *What is Literature?* In addition to the claims noted above that run counter to the bad faith understanding of engaged literature, Sartre also writes that engaged

literature needs to work *against* positing psychological and social laws for people conceived in terms of types (*Ibid.*, 107-08), pronounces against fictional characters being “transformed into objects ... and states of soul” whereby what characters *are*—i.e., as identified with some element of their facticity—takes precedence over what they *do* (*Ibid.*, 174),¹⁷ and complains that “[t]he determinism of the naturalistic novel crushed out life and replaced human actions *by one-way mechanisms*” (*Ibid.*, 98, my emphasis).

As with the particular inconsistencies discussed above, this general inconsistency is likely due in part to the tension between Sartre’s existentialist and Marxist commitments.¹⁸ Because of the problems that Sartre’s main account of engaged literature runs into, as outlined in these last two sections, and because his remarks that are in tension with this account suggest a more promising way to conceive of literature’s connection with human freedom and how an author can be committed to it in her or his works, in the rest of this chapter I propose an alternate account that is in keeping with these remarks of how literature—and by extension, other arts—can be ‘engaged’ and have positive social value in a way that is existentially authentic, i.e., not in bad faith. This account develops de Beauvoir’s ideas about literature and its value, where these ideas complement and help to flesh out the claims of Sartre’s that I take to be preferable.

4.5 Another Take: de Beauvoir on Literature as Discovery

Both accounts of what it is for literature to be engaged see it in terms of a commitment to promote human freedom: the difference lies in what they take promoting freedom to involve. As

¹⁷ Cf. *WL*, 216: “Let us never envisage their [i.e., the characters’] situation *as factual data*” (my emphasis).

¹⁸ Sapiro speculates that Sartre may have formed his view of the writer’s vocation and responsibility in reaction to his grandfather’s influence. His grandfather was a minister who, as Sartre reports in his autobiography *The Words* (1964), conveyed to him the impression that “the world was prey to Evil” and that “there was only one way of salvation: to die to oneself and to the World and contemplate impossible Ideas from the depths of a shipwreck” (Sartre 1964, 178). While this may have helped shape Sartre’s view of writers needing to be distanced from the world in order to reflect upon it *and* having a responsibility to use this position to reveal and speak out against ‘Evil’, it is also plausible that Sartre may have insisted on the writer’s need to be engaged out of a desire that they avoid the bad faith of denying facticity and identifying as pure transcendence that his grandfather’s position exhibits. (See also *WL*, 96 on Sartre’s opposition to an ‘art for art’s sake’ view of artistic autonomy.) Since bad faith is hard to avoid, with any attempt to get out of one kind of bad faith easily falling into the other, it would not be surprising if, wanting authors to avoid the one form of bad faith, Sartre fell into the other.

explained, Sartre sees this as a matter of authors being committed to a progressive, socialist, and democratic political perspective, using their fiction to endorse this perspective and speak out against social problems through how characters are represented, what the dramatic conflicts are, a story's theme or message, etc. In contrast, de Beauvoir sees it in terms of writers *exemplifying* and *expressing* human freedom or transcendence through *how* their work discloses its subject-matter and through the experiences the work offers readers. In other words, where Sartre calls for writers to be committed to writing *about* freedom, de Beauvoir calls for writers to practice it themselves in their writing and in how they relate to readers through their works.

De Beauvoir does not advance a theory of political engagement in literature *per se*, but does suggest how a work can appeal to its readers' freedom and how this is tied to its value as literature. In two essays, "Literature and Metaphysics" (1946; hereafter *LM*), published in *Les Temps modernes* two years before Sartre's articles on literature, and her contribution to a panel discussion on the question "What Can Literature Do?" (1965; hereafter *QPL*), she defines literature as a form of disclosure. In the latter she writes that it is "an activity carried out by human beings, for human beings, with the aim of unveiling the world for them, and this unveiling is an action" (*QPL*, 73; cf. Moi, 2009, 191),¹⁹ and in the former she concludes that a novel, when "honestly read, and honestly written, provides a disclosure of existence in a way unequaled by any other mode of expression" (*LM*, 276). Like other arts, literature reveals aspects of the world, but how it communicates these to readers is not by conveying information or propositional truths. Rather, a literary work presents the world as "a detotalized totality" (*QPL*, 76; cf. Moi, 2009, 192), i.e., a whole that is only ever apprehended from a particular situated perspective and which always exceeds this perspective.

¹⁹ If 'unveiling' or disclosing is itself an action, and if every human action is always carried out within a social, intersubjective context, then *how* it is carried out falls within the scope of the political and the ethical, and so is open to political and ethical evaluation independently of *what* is unveiled or disclosed. For de Beauvoir's notion of the disclosure of being, see *EA* 23-28. Her idea of disclosure, and the difference between her use of this term and Heidegger's, will be discussed further in Chapter 5, Section 5.2.1.

This distinguishes literature from other forms of communication such as the essay.²⁰ Whereas essays are suited to convey abstract general ideas by telling them to the reader, i.e., presenting propositions that the reader is meant to accept (but is of course free to reject), a novel puts readers “through [an] experience of things and events in imagination” in which “they exercise their freedom to judge, interpret, and react” to a greater degree, which Mary Sirridge takes to be “a more radical appeal to [the reader’s] freedom” (Sirridge 2003, 132). Through the creation of imaginative experiences for readers to undergo, de Beauvoir sees literature as uniquely positioned to present lived experience in its thickness and ambiguity and so to disclose what could be called the concrete meaning of such experience and its objects,²¹ which is not generalizable or reducible to abstract concepts and so cannot fully be captured in any finite set of propositions or expressed in any other way. To realize this potential, a writer must present her fictional world, including her characters, their actions, etc., with the same ambiguity that existence and experience have, as “a thick and substantial world open to alternative interpretations” (*Ibid.*, 147) rather than a ‘thin’ world of definite yet general meanings and of characters with fixed essences. As de Beauvoir puts it, the writer “must attempt to present [reality] in its integrity, as it is disclosed in the living relation that is action and feeling before making itself thought” by “evok[ing] the original upspringing of existence in its complete, singular, and temporal truth” (*LM*, 274-75).²²

De Beauvoir takes this potential for disclosing the world as it is experienced—i.e., as an ambiguous tangle of relations that we are required to make sense of, rather than something that comes to us already interpreted and explained—and for presenting objects in their concrete

²⁰ Note the difference between Sartre’s conflation of all forms of communicative writing under the label ‘prose’ and the greater nuance of de Beauvoir’s position. Sartre’s classification does not allow him to distinguish between how fictional works and, say, journalism communicate, where this may explain his idea of engagement as reporting and commenting on social issues.

²¹ See *LM*, 270: “In the real world, the meaning of an object is not a concept graspable by pure understanding. Its meaning is the object as it is disclosed to us in the overall relation we sustain with it, and which is action, emotion, and feeling.”

²² De Beauvoir is drawing at least partly on Bergson here; see *TFW*, 164, 185-89. Cf. de Beauvoir, 1945, 212, on the authentic human subject as a dynamic process of becoming, “a constantly renewed upspringing that is opposed to the fixed reality of things.”

meaningfulness to be literature's primary value. This value could be called 'cognitive' in a broad sense that does not only pertain to reason and propositional knowledge but which can include our capacities as feeling, perceiving, and interpreting beings.²³ By presenting readers with thick experiences to respond to and make sense of, where this can be done only by staying in and working through the experience and not by stepping outside it to apply a theory to explain it,²⁴ literary works model a way of engaging with experience and show how things can be meaningful other than by signifying ideas. As de Beauvoir says, with good literature "[t]he reader ponders, doubts, and takes sides; and this hesitant development of his thought *enriches him in a way that no teaching of doctrine could*" (*Ibid.*, 270, my emphasis).

She insists that the kind of thick imaginative experience that can realize this value only emerges when the author, while writing, goes through this same process of developing his thinking: "the novelist himself [must] participate in the same search he has invited his readers on" (*Ibid.*). For both reader and author this process must be "an adventure of the mind" (*Ibid.*, 272), i.e., one of discovering new directions of thought and new ways of seeing, feeling, and understanding, rather than finding a vehicle to convey a pre-established idea or perspective or to communicate something already known, where this is necessary for a work to disclose the world in the way that gives literature its value. To disclose *new* meanings through his writing, "the author must constantly confront his sketches [i.e., pre-existing plans and intentions] with their realization"—with the potential for these 'sketches' to be modified as the result of this confrontation—and "as the story unfolds, he [will see] truths appear that were previously unknown to him, questions whose solutions he does not possess" (*Ibid.*). This suggests a discovery-oriented model of artistic creation and experience, according to which the meaning expressed in or disclosed by an artwork is not available prior to its expression or disclosure but

²³ The discussion of the cognitive value of art and literature, at least within the analytic philosophical tradition, has been dominated by the narrower conception of 'cognitive' as pertaining to knowledge, and with 'knowledge' mainly being understood in terms of propositional knowledge or 'knowledge-that'. See Stolnitz 1992 for the paper most responsible for setting the current agenda for this discussion.

²⁴ For a similar perspective see Sontag 1966. The sort of bottom-up understanding this calls for, as opposed to the top-down application of a theoretical framework, is in the spirit of what Kant (1793) calls reflective judgment.

emerges through these processes. This is because concrete meanings are not separable from the objects and experiences that bear them and are always particular and occasional: as de Beauvoir writes, “a smile is indistinguishable from a smiling face, and the meaning of an event indistinguishable from the event itself” (*Ibid.*, 275).²⁵

Accordingly, any literary work that is used as a vehicle to illustrate or deliver an already worked-out idea will fail to realize the distinct communicative potential of literature, operating in a mode closer to that of the essay with the writer functioning more like what de Beauvoir calls a ‘theoretician’ than a novelist. This clearly contrasts with Sartre’s call for engaged literature to convey a pre-established political perspective to which the writer is committed and to promote preconceived solutions to pre-diagnosed social problems. As de Beauvoir writes, literature’s disclosure “is not a matter of exploiting on a literary plane truths established beforehand on the philosophical [or, political] plane, but, rather, of manifesting an aspect of ... experience that cannot otherwise be manifested” (*Ibid.*, 274-75). Likewise, she argues that fictional characters should not “be fashioned, a priori, out of a heavy reliance on theories, formulas, and labels,” which, notably, she links to “a certain measure of bad faith” (*Ibid.*, 271).

Not only is it inauthentic to use characters and events as vehicles to illustrate theoretical positions, but it works against the reader’s freedom. “[I]f in advance [a writer] predicts the conclusions to which his reader must come,” she writes, “if he ... pressures the reader into adhering to pre-established theses, if he allows him *only an illusion of freedom*, then the work of fiction is only an incongruous mystification” (*Ibid.*, my emphasis). Instead, a genuine appeal to readers’ freedom will treat them as other autonomous disclosers of being, capable of working through the ‘thick’ or ‘ambiguous’ experience of a complex narrative event and making sense of

²⁵ De Beauvoir ties concrete meaning to the metaphysical view that “appearance is reality, and existence is the support of essence”, in contrast to views that, “separating essence from existence, disdain appearance in favor of the hidden reality” (*LM*, 275). The former view could be called broadly pragmatist, and includes existentialism with its insistence on existence preceding essence, while the latter might be called broadly Platonist.

it themselves, and not as dependent on being given an explanation or interpretation in order to know what to think or how to feel about what they are being given to imagine.²⁶

This is not, of course, to say that appealing to the reader's freedom is a matter of the work being a hermeneutic free-for-all with artworks being equivalent to a Rorschach test's ink blots. That would also falsify how people and events are, insofar as the objects of lived experience, while 'ambiguous' and multivalent in what they mean, do not support *just any* interpretation. The idea that a writer should interpret the work for its readers and give them its meaning—e.g., tell them its political significance or moral status—and the idea that the meaning of a work is something each reader chooses for him- or herself, are *both* in bad faith. The former takes the reader's potential for transcendence and disclosure to be limited, while the latter treats readers as if they were purely transcendent and unconstrained by the particular factual aspects of a work in their understanding of it. Instead, a genuine appeal to readers' freedom—one that treats them authentically—will present them with an experience from one or more perspectives that disclose characters and events as meaningful in some way, with these meanings not being presented as definitive to be accepted and held onto but rather as to be 'entertained', i.e., for the reader to experience, reflect on, and make sense of how one might think or feel them to be true from within that perspective: that is, not to *tell* them *what* things mean, but to *show* them *how* things can be found meaningful.

The way literature can be most cognitively valuable, then, is not to be found in the 'content' it discloses but rather in the experience of taking up and 'entertaining' them, which exercises one's freedom to transcend any given perspective and always see things from another angle. This could also be considered ethically valuable insofar as authentic being-with-others is at the core of any existentialist ethics (see de Beauvoir 1948; Grene 1952), and insofar as authors and readers must relate to one another and to a work's characters authentically in order to write and read in a way that allows for this value to be realized. An author must not be in bad faith towards readers

²⁶ Cf. *LM*, 270: "The theoretician wants to compel us to adhere to the idea that the thing and the event suggested to him. Many minds find such intellectual docility repugnant. They want to retain their *freedom of thought*; they like instead a story that imitates life's opacity, ambiguity, and impartiality."

or characters in the ways discussed above, and readers must approach characters as individuals to understand, if not empathize with, and must not expect the work to tell them what to think and how to feel about the experiences it gives them, while also refraining from approaching the work as something onto which they can project any meaning they want.

This understanding of how literature can appeal to readers' freedom gives a clearer and more plausible account of how literature can promote freedom and reduce alienation—e.g., by helping readers avoid bad faith towards others or towards themselves—than Sartre does. But while literature, written and read authentically, can be cognitively and ethically valuable on this account, one might wonder how this counts as literature being *politically* engaged or committed, since it prohibits good (i.e., authentic) literature from being used to advance a pre-established political agenda²⁷ or convince the reader to agree with a predetermined perspective, rather than presenting perspectives on political matters to be 'entertained' but not necessarily endorsed.

4.6 Toward an Authentic Understanding of Engaged Art

As already noted, de Beauvoir was interested in literature's potential cognitive and ethical value—though these are not her terms—and did not intend to offer a theory of politically engaged literature as did Sartre; however, there is still a political dimension to be found in her account. Specifically, the aspects of literature that are cognitively and ethically valuable on her account have to do with the sorts of relations that can be formed between authors and readers, and with an author's or reader's ways of relating to characters as persons: viz., by regarding others as beings-for-themselves who are always both factual and transcendent, both situated and free, and so avoiding bad faith towards them (the ethically valuable part), and by imaginatively adopting other perspectives and experiencing how things can be meaningful or valuable from another standpoint, thereby exercising one's ability to transcend one's own fixed perspective in thought, feeling, and imagination (the cognitively valuable part). Because they intrinsically

²⁷ Cf. *LM*, 272, where de Beauvoir writes that one cannot write authentic literature "if one limits oneself to disguising a *preconstructed ideological framework* in a fictional ... garment" (my emphasis).

involve relations with others, these same aspects of literature can also be considered to have *social* or *political* value to the extent that they exemplify socially or politically positive interpersonal relations. Moreover, these values are realized together: one cannot transcend one's current standpoint to take up and entertain another's perspective without (i) being a factual-and-transcendent being, (ii) recognizing the other whose perspective is entertained as also a factual-and-transcendent being, and (iii) relating to this other through an authentic form of interpersonal relation that is socially and politically positive insofar as it is based on a mutual recognition of each person as a being-for-itself.

This third way in which literature can be valuable can be understood in terms of the idea of solidarity, which highlights its social-political dimension. 'Solidarity' here should not be taken to imply an endorsement of the positions or support for the goals of those with whom one is in solidarity, but should be understood more broadly in terms of seeing others as beings who are fundamentally like oneself in some relevant way. In what Richard Rorty calls the concept's traditional philosophical understanding, it is a recognition "that there is something within each of us ... which resonates to the presence of this same thing in other human beings" (Rorty 1989, 189). For de Beauvoir, literature not only presents readers with new perspectives but presents them as tied to another consciousness, differently situated than us, with which we are nevertheless able to identify by taking up these perspectives ourselves.²⁸ Through reading, such a perspective "becomes mine without ceasing to be other. I give up my 'I' in favor of the 'I' of the person who is speaking and nonetheless I remain myself" (*QLP*, 82). As Sirridge puts it, "[w]hen I read literature ... I remain perfectly aware that I am not Kafka or Balzac; yet, I adopt the novelist's situation, so to speak, from the inside out" (Sirridge 2003, 131).

This co-inhabiting of a perspective that we recognize as being at once both our own and another's makes us aware that we share a mode of being or 'form of life' with anyone whose

²⁸ As with 'solidarity', talk of 'identifying' should not be taken to imply approval or sympathy, only understanding. Arguably, such understanding is a necessary basis for any judgment like approval or sympathy—or disapproval or condemnation—to be warranted and made responsibly. In other words, *ethical* critique must start from a position of authentic or non-bad-faith understanding.

perspective we can adopt in this way. As such, it helps us overcome the gap that separates our consciousness from those of others and connects us in a more fundamental way than what is often referred to as ‘empathy’, which is more likely to involve having a feeling that is qualitatively similar to but numerically distinct from another’s feeling than co-inhabiting a perspective. And solidarity of this sort is a politically valuable way of relating to others insofar as the recognition that they are beings like oneself is a minimally necessary condition for any other politically or socially valuable relation or activity,²⁹ and insofar as the absence of this recognition in the objectification or dehumanization of others is at the root of most or all forms of oppression. Moreover, while we can become aware of our solidarity with others in an abstract, intellectual way, e.g., by reading philosophical arguments for the claim *that* all humans share a form of life, what literature and other arts are uniquely positioned to do is allow us to grasp this concretely and feel it, letting us know *what* it is like to share a mode of being with others.

On this account, literature that is written from an authentic commitment to human freedom will realize this in the way the author relates to readers through the work, and in the way he or she conceives and presents characters and their actions, with writing in this way *itself* counting as a socially or politically valuable act. Unlike Sartre’s account, this does not require works to address overtly political matters—e.g., class conflicts, social prejudices, etc.—or to be about the political situations or problems of the societies and times in which their authors are writing in order to be good *qua* literature. This requirement is most likely tied to Sartre’s understanding of prose writing as ‘transparent’ and so connecting readers to the world by directing their awareness to it through the written word. Sartre’s focus on the ideas or objects that words refer or point to may have led him to assume that literature’s engagement must also involve the work’s content, with a work that promotes freedom needing to be *about* freedom. Instead of taking the author’s commitment to be a commitment to write about freedom, de Beauvoir’s account takes it to be a

²⁹ This is analogous to the way that de Beauvoir, in her ethics, takes freedom to be minimally necessary for any other ethical choice or action; see *EA*, 29-34. The role of freedom in her ethics will be discussed further in Chapter 7 in connection with the moral value of art as disclosive expression.

commitment to write in a way that *itself* realizes and promotes freedom, where this gives a work that is written in this way its social value.

Literature that is authentically engaged, then, will be written in a spirit of discovery and exploration, without the author selecting in advance a message for the work to convey or deciding how the subject matter will be disclosed and what it will mean but instead having these things emerge during the development of the author's thinking, feeling, and understanding as she goes beyond her preconceived notions and positions in the process of writing to discover a new perspective on her subject-matter. By writing in this way, an author will avoid imposing a meaning or interpretation on the narrative's events, its characters, or the reader's experience and understanding, and so can disclose for both herself and her readers genuinely new ways in which things can be understood or valued, and moreover will do so in a way that is ethically and socially positive in that it recognizes readers' freedom and does not reduce them, or the work's characters, to their facticity or treat them in the manner of the in-itself.

Furthermore, on this account it will be inauthentic for authors to use their writing to advance pre-existing agendas or illustrate pre-established theories, whether philosophical, psychological, or political. Doing so risks being in bad faith toward one's characters and readers and so limits the ways in which one's work can be valuable. Treating the reader as one who is expected to passively receive and accept the ideas presented by a text, or as a means to social change by trying to motivate her or him to take certain kinds of actions, is an ethically flawed and politically problematic way of relating to another person regardless of how positive the ideals are in the name of which this is done: propaganda for a good cause is still propaganda, and so fails to respect autonomy to some extent. A work will be artistically worse on this account insofar as its presentation of characters, events, and experience relies on clichés or received ideas and is thereby artificial, lacking the thickness and particularity of actual persons, events, and lived experiences and presenting them as abstractly rather than concretely meaningful.

Of course, this does not mean that authors are unable to authentically write about explicitly political issues, including presenting perspectives on social phenomena that disclose them as

problematic: the political dimension of life is as much a part of human existence as any other and so cannot be overlooked without risking bad faith by denying a factual element of many, if not all, experiences. But, we can now ask, what might an *authentic* politically-themed work look like on this account?

Situations with overtly political aspects, e.g., those that exemplify recognized social problems, will need to be presented as concrete experiences as they are felt and lived through by their participants, and only secondarily as ‘political’ in a theoretical or intellectualized sense. In other words, existentially authentic political art will deal in the ‘raw materials’, so to speak, out of which political issues are abstracted and theorized as they are prior to their theoretical ‘processing’. Characters will not be presented as representatives of general types or mouthpieces for ideological positions and situations, events, and actions will not be presented to illustrate general or abstract theories. Instead, characters who hold or act on political beliefs will be presented as fully realized, multi-dimensional human beings who are more than just their political stances or social groups, and situations or events with an explicit political dimension will be occasions for the writer to express something of what these situations or events are like for their participants, giving the reader a perspective on them from within rather than a diagnosis of them from on high, where this will involve undergoing an imaginative experience that is always partly ambiguous or uncertain, with what the reader thinks and feels developing through the experience rather than being predetermined and dictated.

Likewise, and most importantly, authentic political art will be treated as an occasion for the artist to explore and develop her or his thinking and feeling about the political aspects of the ‘content’ presented in the work, e.g., getting clearer on, and disclosing something new about, why exactly some issue or situation is or is not problematic, rather than as an occasion to present her or his existing perspective on the issues. In other words, authentically political art will be part of the *development* of the political thinking of both the artist and the audience, where the direction in which this development will lead cannot fully be foreseen in advance, instead of merely reporting on, reflecting, or appealing to the current state of their political understanding.

The account just outlined has a number of advantages over Sartre's. Most obviously, it avoids the problems of bad faith and internal inconsistency discussed above and it does so while being compatible with, and even helping to make sense of, the remarks that Sartre meant to be part of his view of engaged literature but which are in tension with what comes across most clearly as his main account. These remarks include, for example, his claim that "a writer is committed when he tries to achieve the most lucid and the most complete consciousness of being embarked" (*WL*, 56), with 'embarked' here meaning situated and responsible. This takes the engaged writer to be committed to expressing, authentically, the perspective taken on that situation, i.e., what the situation is like for the one in it and conscious of it, rather than being committed to endorsing a political position or ideology.

Sartre also writes that engaged literature is a matter of "discovering new countries of the mind" rather than repeating "commonplaces" (*WL*, 68), which fits with de Beauvoir's emphasis on writing as discovery but is in tension with his main theory of engaged writing as endorsing pre-established positions, and that "[i]nsincerity [i.e., bad faith] begins when the artist wants to ascribe a meaning to his misfortunes, a kind of immanent finality" (*Ibid.*, 233), which again fits more with de Beauvoir's account than with most of Sartre's other remarks. Moreover, he argues explicitly against bad faith in the depiction of a work's characters when he writes that people, including fictional people, must be understood as "absolutes, inimitable and incomparable" rather than as representatives of general types (*Ibid.*, 234). Also, his claim that literature is "alienated" when it loses consciousness of its autonomy by "submit[ting] to temporal powers *or to an ideology* ... when it considers itself *as a means* and not as an unconditioned end" (*Ibid.*, 113, my emphasis) is in line with de Beauvoir's view that works of art lose much of their value when used to illustrate a preconceived theory or ideology, but is again in tension with his main account. Much of what is contained in the appendix to *What is Literature?*, "Writing for One's Furthermore Age", when read in tandem with de Beauvoir's two essays on literature, can be seen to be working towards the kind of account of authentically engaged literature that I have argued for, and away from the position he takes earlier in the book.

Finally, it is a virtue of the de Beauvoirian account that it connects literature's artistic value with its social-political, moral, and cognitive values so that the questions of why the latter values count in favour of a work's literary quality, and why the failure to realize these values will count against its quality *qua* art, no longer arise. The connecting link here is authenticity, which is held both to be a criterion of artistic success and to be a necessary condition for the ways that literature can be cognitively, ethically, and socially or politically beneficial. A work that presents events and experience with the thickness and ambiguity of actual human actions and lived experiences as seen and felt from within, that presents its characters as both factual/situated and transcendent/free, and that presents the meaningfulness of events and experiences as concrete and qualitative rather than abstract and conceptual, will be better artistically insofar as it is more complex, nuanced, and concrete, and insofar as it gives readers a vital imaginative experience to undergo rather than a series of ideas to grasp. Likewise, such a work will be more cognitively valuable, giving the reader a deeper understanding of genuinely new perspectives that disclose the world in new ways and that make available new ways in which things can be meaningful or valuable, while also putting the reader and author into an ethically and socially positive relation of solidarity that involves the mutual recognition of each other's freedom.³⁰

4.7 Conclusion: Summary and Implications

This chapter has argued for an alternative to Sartre's account of engaged or committed writing, using de Beauvoir's understanding of literature's ability to disclose new perspectives and meanings that go beyond the author or reader's familiar horizon and habits of thinking and feeling, at least when writing and reading are pursued as processes of discovery that allow for the development of thoughts, feelings, and understanding.³¹ For Sartre, literature is engaged when it addresses political issues and advocates in favour of social conditions that promote human

³⁰ See also Baugh 1988 on the existentialist idea of authenticity as connected to both the artistic and political values of artworks.

³¹ While the focus has been on literature, this account can be extended to other artforms insofar as they also can make available genuinely new ways of perceiving, feeling, understanding, and experiencing and thereby can help their audiences transcend their perceptual, emotional, cognitive, and evaluative habits.

freedom and against conditions of oppression that alienate people from their inherent freedom, and he equates engaged literature with *good* literature and sees literature that is not engaged in this way as artistically flawed. In contrast, on the alternative account, literature best promotes human freedom when it *does not* illustrate pre-established theories or make points that an author is already committed to, but rather when it presents thick, ambiguous experiences for the reader to work through and make sense of, since this itself both instantiates and exemplifies a positive form of interpersonal relation, viz., authentic being-with-others. On this account, the use of an artwork to illustrate ideas or deliver messages, however positive the ideas or noble the messages, counts as an artistic flaw in the work *and* makes it less ethically and politically valuable.

Unlike Sartre's account, the de Beauvoirian alternative locates the political dimension of an artwork not in its content but in its form, and specifically in the relation it sets up between artist and audience. This is echoed by Marcuse's claim that truly politically valuable art will not be art that has overtly political content or that is used as a means of making statements or pushing an agenda,³² but will be art that involves what he calls the 'restructuring' of consciousness and the transcendence of the status quo (*AD*, 44-53, 72-73). There are other points of similarity between the position that Marcuse advocates and the account I have argued for here that are unfortunately beyond the scope of this chapter to examine. I also do not have room here to properly explore examples of a tendency I have noticed in current discourses about art and fiction, both academic and popular, to assume something like Sartre's account and to consider artworks as good when, and because, they present the 'right' political perspectives, and as artistically flawed on account of content that is deemed to be politically problematic. Since I do not have space to address this adequately, I will instead suggest why, if there is such a tendency, the de Beauvoirian account of art's value and of how art can be authentically politically engaged is important.

To the extent that literature and other arts might be presented in educational contexts in a way that teaches students to expect—or even demand—that artworks, especially fictional

³² See *AD*, xii-xiii: "The more immediately political the work of art, the more it reduces the power of estrangement [i.e., the ability to disclose things in genuinely *new* ways] and the radical, transcendent goals of change."

narratives, will endorse political stances and illustrate theories, students would be kept from learning to engage with art in the ways that realize the kinds of values that de Beauvoir insists art can have, and, as I have argued, from the way in which artworks can truly have political value. Moreover, this way of presenting art may be promoting bad faith to the extent that readers and viewers are taught to understand fictional characters and their actions in ways that reduce them to elements of their facticity and treat them as representatives of general social types. As Sartre says, it is a bad work of art that “aims to please by flattering” (*WL*, 45), where one of the ways a work can flatter is by endorsing a political position that is in line with and seems to confirm its audience’s existing beliefs, values, and commitments. Not only does this risk encouraging the epistemic vice of confirmation bias, but by affirming what a reader or viewer is assumed to already think and by pandering to the ways its audience members are assumed to already feel, such an approach denies them the chance to go beyond these fixed perspectives and develop further in their thinking, feeling, and understanding, where this will not necessarily result in an overturning or rejection of their political position but can also add to and thereby deepen their understanding of it, making their commitment to it more authentic.

As de Beauvoir was aware, works that flatter their audience by giving them what they already know and like are easier to consume and so are likely to be more popular than works that challenge audiences by presenting them with something genuinely new from which they can develop not only as thinkers and feelers but as moral and political agents. Near the end of “Literature and Metaphysics”, she writes that “the reader quite often refuses to participate sincerely in the experiment into which the author tries to lead him; he does not read as he demands that one write; he is afraid to take risks, to venture. [...] But the reader must not try to elude this uncertainty and his share of the adventure. He should not forget that his collaboration is necessary, since the novel’s distinctive feature is, precisely, to appeal to his freedom” (*LM*, 276). In other words, the value that literature and other arts can have, including their social or political value, depends not only on how they are created and presented but also on how they are engaged with by their recipients: readers, viewers, listeners, etc. If the account I have outlined

and argued for is right, education in literature and other artforms should aim to teach people how to engage with works that challenge them and that present new and genuinely other perspectives, and moreover should work against their desires to be flattered and any expectations they might have that artworks will, or should, cater to what they already think, know, and agree with, or expectations that an artwork will tell them what to think and feel about what it presents them with rather than leaving them with experiential ambiguities to work through for themselves. This is especially true for educators who are concerned with increasing students' political awareness or promoting positive social relations, since teaching people to want to be flattered and to want others to hand them an interpretation of their own experiences can itself alienate them from their inherent freedom *qua* conscious beings-for-themselves, and so will help to make them exactly the sort of political subjects that such educators, if they are truly 'committed', should want most to avoid.

5. A SYNTHESIZED ACCOUNT OF ART AS CREATIVE DISCOVERY

In each of the previous three chapters I have addressed a central issue in the philosophy of art—the idea of expression, the nature of artistic creation, and the political and moral dimensions of art and art-making, respectively—through a discussion of one or two philosophers and a question or problem that arises from considering their works. The views of the philosophers discussed and their positions and arguments that were analysed and defended contain, either explicitly or implicitly, a shared understanding of what artworks are and of the importance or value of art for human life, both individually and collectively. In this chapter I make this shared understanding explicit so as to lay the ground for a revitalized expression-based account of art and its value that synthesizes the ideas from Collingwood, Dewey, Bergson, and de Beauvoir that are discussed above. Bringing them together in this way extends and develops their ideas such that the synthesized account goes beyond the expressed views or published accounts of each thinker in a way that is consistent with these views while encompassing them within a broader, synoptic perspective. Viewing art from this perspective sheds more light on the nature of artistic creation and reception, and on the value of these activities, than does the perspective of any one of these thinkers when taken on their own.

5.1 Why a General Theory of Art is Worth Pursuing

Before presenting this account, arguing for its plausibility as a contender alongside established theories of art, and considering its implications for some current debates concerning art and value, I defend both the usefulness and the possibility of answering the question “what is art?” against two challenges for any attempt to give a general account of art that tells us what makes

some things, but not others, count as artworks. These challenges are found in Dominic Lopes's recent endorsement of what he calls a 'buck-passing' theory of art that bypasses the general question of what art is in favour of questions about specific art forms, and in Morris Weitz's argument that 'art' is an open concept that necessarily eludes definition.

5.1.1 Why a General Account of Art is Still Necessary

Lopes presents his buck-passing theory of art in "Nobody Needs a Theory of Art" (2008) and in *Beyond Art* (2014). He distinguishes between three kinds of art-related theories—(i) theories of art, which tell us whether something is a work of art; (ii) theories of the arts, which tell us whether an activity or practice is one of the arts, i.e., an art form; and (iii) theories of individual arts, which tell us what makes something a work in a given art form (Lopes 2008, 119)—and argues that it would be better to focus on the third kind of theory and on questions internal to particular art forms, and to leave aside attempts to work out theories of the first kind. This is because Lopes thinks that we have reached an impasse in our attempts to explain what makes something a work of art by specifying some quality that all artworks, and only artworks, have and that a theory of art which instead 'passes the buck' to theories of the other two kinds is all we need so long as we do have these other theories. He formalizes his buck-passing definition as: "x is a work of art if and only if x is a work in activity *P* and *P* is one of the arts" (*Ibid.*, 109).

Lopes thinks that his buck-passing theory is preferable to what he calls 'buck-stopping' theories, which attempt to fully account for what makes something an artwork rather than appealing to further theories to complete the account. This is largely due to how he understands the history of aesthetics and of theorizing about the arts. He contends that theories aiming to give a general definition of art are recent developments, citing Paul Kristeller's "The Modern System of the Arts" (1951, 1952) in support of the claim that the concept of art arose in the eighteenth century and that prior to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the main concern of those who philosophized about art was to give a theory of *the arts* that would establish the unity of painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and poetry as 'fine' arts in distinction from the

sciences and the ‘useful’ arts (Lopes 2008, 111-112). Since he takes the interest in theories of art that arose in the twentieth century to be primarily a response to the way that avant-garde works such as Duchamp’s *Fountain*, Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes*, or Cage’s *4’33”* challenge audiences to ask how they count as artworks, he takes theories of art to be primarily intended to explain these ‘hard cases’.

However, he argues that the theories currently on offer not only disagree in their conclusions but have reached an impasse that gives us no principled way of deciding between theories that give opposite answers concerning the cases they are meant to address. This is because the two broad types into which these theories fall, which he alternately calls ‘functionalist’ and ‘proceduralist’ (*Ibid.*, 116ff) and ‘traditional’ and ‘genetic’ (Lopes 2014, 49ff),¹ not only “rely ... on different intuitions about the puzzle cases” but also have “different criteria of theory choice”, where the latter is partly determined by the former (Lopes 2008, 119). Not only are procedural or genetic theories more likely to admit hard cases as artworks, where functionalist or traditional theories can more easily deny their status as art, but each theory sees this as a reason in favour of their greater plausibility over theories of the other sort.

Lopes thinks that this impasse is a reason to give up trying to work out a buck-stopping theory and to look for other ways of answering what makes something art. Since his buck-passing theory defers to theories of individual art forms to say what makes something a work in those forms, he takes it to be more promising since, he thinks, it is easier to come up with theories of individual art forms than it is to come up with a single theory of art in general that will apply to all art forms. This is because of the “dizzying array of phenomena” that these different forms encompass, where contemplating what feature might be shared by a wide variety of types of items in virtue of which all are artworks is enough to “induce queasiness” (Lopes 2014, 3). Moreover, he takes his buck-passing strategy to be just as, or more, explanatorily useful

¹ These types roughly map onto one another, although functionalist theories, which define art in terms of some function that all and only artworks have, are more properly seen as a sub-species of ‘traditional’ theories, which define art in terms of the possession of some exhibited feature or set of features that is unique to artworks, since a function is only one kind of exhibited feature among possible others. Likewise, procedural theories can be seen as a sub-species of genetic theories.

since, he argues, the questions that avant-garde works raise may have been mistaken as challenging our ideas of art in general and might be better understood as challenges to theories of specific art forms. On this view, the question raised by, say, *Fountain* or 4'33", is not 'how does this count as art?' but rather 'how does this count as sculpture?' or 'how does this count as music?', where we want answers to these questions so that we can know how to understand and appreciate these new and unfamiliar works (Lopes 2008, 121).

Finally, Lopes argues that we are better off passing the buck to theories of individual arts since, when we have a viable set of theories of individual art forms, he thinks, there is nothing further that we would need from a theory of art in general in order to answer philosophically interesting questions about artworks. Such theories not only let us answer the questions raised by avant-garde works by expanding our conception of what, say, a work of sculpture or music can be, or by expanding our conception of the arts by pioneering a new art form, just as many of the hardest cases in the avant-garde such as Robert Barry's *Inert Gas Series* and *All the things I know but of which I am not at the moment thinking...* (both 1969) paved the way for the new category of 'conceptual art'. They will also enable us to address ontological and epistemological questions about particular works in certain art forms—e.g., questions internal to philosophy of literature, philosophy of music, philosophy of film, philosophy of dance, etc.—that let us ground empirical art studies into these forms (Lopes 2014, 64ff), along with questions about the value of works that can inform our appreciative practices. Thus, Lopes concludes, "[t]here is nothing left to explain when you have theories of the art forms and the arts" (Lopes 2008, 127).

While Lopes is right that much interesting philosophical work stands to be done by focusing on particular art forms, he is wrong to hold that general theories of art are no longer necessary or useful for answering philosophically interesting questions raised by particular artworks and art practices or that the kind of impasse he describes is inevitable. His argument can be challenged on both historical and logical grounds.

In the first place, as James Young notes, Lopes's sense of the history of theories of art and the arts, and his reliance on Kristeller for his historical picture, are questionable (Young 2016,

424-427; see also Porter 2009, Young 2015). Specifically, Young argues that Batteux (1746) and other eighteenth century writers on the arts were *not* the first to have grouped together activities such as painting, music, poetry, dance, and sculpture as arts. Even if the term ‘art’ was widely used prior to the eighteenth century to refer to any craft or skill, treating the above activities as a distinct sub-category that broadly maps onto what we would now call ‘fine arts’ goes back to ancient times. Plato and Aristotle, for instance, conceived of these activities as imitative arts in distinction from other ‘arts’ such as shoe-making, farming, medicine, etc., where the common factor by which they were grouped—here, their mimetic status as imitations—gave not only a theory of the arts but a theory of art: that something is an artwork insofar as it made to imitate or represent life (*Ibid.*, 425, 429).² Moreover, Young argues that when Batteux, in the eighteenth century, inquired into what the activities grouped together as the fine arts had in common, he was looking for a theory of art and not only for a theory of which activities were fine arts, since membership in this category had long been generally agreed upon (*Ibid.*, 426).

This is a problem for Lopes since the impasse between buck-stopping theories motivates the turn away from theories of art to theories of the arts and of specific art forms only if he is right that theories of art arose in the twentieth century to address the problems posed by avant-garde hard cases. As he admits, “if the search for a theory of art is truly venerable, then the expectation that it should cope with the hard cases in the last century is an afterthought, and it is no great strike against a theory” that it fails to do this (Lopes 2014, 24). While we need not think the ability to explain recent hard cases is a mere afterthought, the fact that the historical story Lopes gets from Kristeller is dubious, and that theories of art seem to be more venerable than this story allows, undermines Lopes’s main motivation for passing the buck away from such theories.

This problem aside, it is not clear why the purported impasse between recent buck-stopping theories gives us a reason to turn away from such theories of art altogether. This assumes both

² See Plato 1997, 975d; Aristotle 1984a, 1371b4-12, Aristotle 1984b, 1447a10-1447b9. Even though the dialogue *Epinomis* (Plato 1997) is thought not to have been written by Plato, its authorship is not a problem for the point here since it still shows that grouping together activities such as painting, music, poetry, dance, etc., and the idea that these arts belonged together in virtue of their being imitative, was present well before the eighteenth century.

that functionalist/traditional and proceduralist/genetic theories are the only types of buck-stopping theory and that there are no principles of theory choice that would let us side with one theory in its explanations of hard cases that would not beg the question by appealing to how it explain these cases. However, it is not clear why we should preclude in advance either the possibility of a theory that falls somewhere between the traditional and genetic approaches or combines elements of both in a way that would avoid the impasse, or the possibility of settling the debate without using how a theory deals with hard cases as a decisive factor in the settlement. It is also not clear why the same impasse should be less likely to occur between theories of the arts or of individual art forms, since different theories will disagree to some extent over how to define individual art forms³ or which things to accept as works in a given artform, and since the fact that a particular theory does or does not count some activity as an art form or something as a work in a given form—e.g., a theory that explains why Cage’s 4’33” is or is not a musical work—could just as well be taken by proponents as a reason to favour that theory over others.

The other main challenge to Lopes’s argument against the necessity or usefulness of theories of art is the objection that it is circular. Recall that the buck-passing theory states: “*x* is a work of art if and only if *x* is a work in activity *P* and *P* is one of the arts”, and so passes the buck from attempts to explain what makes something count as art in general to attempts to determine what makes an activity or practice count as one of the arts or what makes something count as a work in a given art form. However, it is unclear how we can determine membership in the category of the arts without explicitly appealing to, or implicitly presupposing, a theory of what art itself is. That is, how can we give a principled and non-arbitrary reason for counting painting, music, and literature among the arts but not, say, cooking, gardening, sailing, and auto mechanics without being able to explain what it is for something to count as art in the first place? Likewise, it is unclear how we can have a theory of what makes something count not just as a product of an activity but as a *work* in that activity *qua* art form without at least presupposing an understanding of what makes something art in general, given that not every product of an activity that is an art

³ See S. Davies 2014, 330, who notes a similar ‘impasse’ for current theories of music as a medium.

form counts as a work of art in that form. That is, without an explicit or assumed idea of what it is for something to be art, how can we justify counting some painted surfaces as artworks and excluding others, such as walls painted by home decorators, or counting some films as artworks but excluding a home movie of a family's holiday?

This worry is noted by Young, by Stephen Davies in his review of *Beyond Art*, and is at least implicit in David Davies's review of the same. As Young writes, "[a] buck passing theory cannot give us an account of which [activities] are arts without refuting itself. As soon as a theory of the arts tells us what the [activities] that are arts have in common, the buck is stopped" (Young 2016, 430). Regarding which items count as works of art in an activity that is one of the arts, Stephen Davies notes that the buck-passing theory "need[s] a way of distinguishing within [art forms] which of their instances are art and which are not. In other words, it looks as if we need an account of the buck stopping kind that tells us what is art before any buck passing can begin" (S. Davies, 2014, 331). And while David Davies writes of the buck-passing theory's inability to give us any "principled (non-parochial) basis for deciding if practices in other cultures or traditions are arts [or] whether to classify artifacts in other cultures as artworks" (Davies 2015b, paragraphs 10-11), his point can be extended to deciding whether practices and artifacts in our own culture are to be classified as arts and artworks, respectively. This is because Lopes seems to be left with no resources except an appeal to the fact that certain activities in certain mediums are commonly considered to be arts and certain of their products are commonly treated as artworks within our own culture; however, this appeal to common practice presupposes a version of a buck passing theory: viz., an institutional theory of art.

Lopes's response to this worry is inadequate. Regarding the objection that the buck-passing theory cannot justify not counting an everyday coffee mug as an artwork given that ceramics is plausibly an art form and the mug is a work in the medium of ceramics, Lopes argues that even if the physical medium is the same, the mug and a work of ceramic art can be distinguished by the fact that their making and reception involve different practices that are governed by different norms, including norms of appreciation (Lopes 2013, 145-147). This clarifies that, for Lopes, art

forms are not identical with mediums but are appreciative kinds that have “medium profiles” and sets of “goodness properties” (*Ibid.*, 142, 146) that distinguish them from other practices involving that medium. Thus, he argues, even though the coffee mug is a work in the medium of ceramics it is not a work of ceramic-art because it is of a different appreciative kind than works of ceramic-art are. However, this fails adequately to address the objection: even though a new distinction is introduced to separate the coffee mug from ceramic art (*Ibid.*, 146), there is still no principled basis for deciding which appreciative kinds are *art* kinds and which are not without appealing to a theory of what makes something art in general. That is, why, apart from an appeal to common practice—which, as noted, would presuppose some version of an institutional theory of art—, should we take the distinction between ceramic art and the mug or their respective appreciative kinds to be a distinction between art and non-art?

Without a theory of art we also cannot account in a non-arbitrary way for what Lopes calls “free agents” (*Ibid.* 18), i.e., works that do not seem to belong to any art form, of which many of the hard cases are examples such as *Inert Gas Series* or *All the things I know....* Free agents pose a problem for the buck-passing theory since it requires every artwork to be a work in at least one art form. Lopes tries to avoid this problem by taking apparent free agents either to belong to established art forms all along—where in realizing this we expand our conceptions of the art form, e.g., in the way that counting *4’33”* as a work of music expands our idea of what music can be—or to pioneer new art forms (*Ibid.*, 191). However, either alternative assumes that the thing in question is, in fact, an artwork, but this assumption is arbitrary without a theory of art to justify it. Lopes is aware of this assumption, noting that when we are confronted with a free agent one of our options is to deny that it is an artwork, but he rules this out “not as a matter of logic, but as a matter of advantage” (*Ibid.*). This is a tacit admission on Lopes’s part that the buck-passing theory offers no way out of the impasse that motivates it so long as the question of whether a given hard case is an artwork or not remains open. But this cannot be decided in advance without begging the very question at hand, so Lopes should be seen here as attempting to stipulate the problem away instead of addressing it.

Since a buck-passing theory cannot give informative and non-arbitrary answers to the main questions that theories of the arts or theories of particular art forms are meant to answer without at least implicitly presupposing a buck-stopping theory, Lopes is wrong to claim that we can do without a substantive theory of art. Thus, his argument for the supposed uselessness of theorizing about art in general does not pose a problem for my project. However, the above discussion has been useful for highlighting some of the desiderata of a viable theory of art: (i) that it can ground a theory of the arts as well as theories of individual arts; (ii) that it can explain why some items produced in a medium or activity that we count as one of the arts are not themselves artworks; (iii) that it can explain how some things can count as art without belonging to any particular art form, i.e., how there can be genuine ‘free agents’; (iv) that it can give conceptual foundations and practical guidance for ‘empirical art studies’; and (v) that it can inform appreciative practices such as art criticism and evaluation.

5.1.2 Why a General Account of Art is Still Possible

Morris Weitz’s paper “The Role of Theory in Aesthetics” (1956) might seem to present a greater problem for my project since he argues not only that a theory of art is unnecessary⁴ but that any attempt to formulate a definitive answer to the question ‘what is art?’ by stating a property or set of properties that makes something art is bound to miss the mark. This is because he takes theory-based approaches to “misconstru[e] the logic of the concept of art” (Weitz 1956, 28) by treating it as a closed concept when it is in fact radically open. For Weitz, a concept is open if “its conditions of application are emendable and corrigible; i.e., if a situation or case can be imagined or secured which would call for some sort of *decision* on our part to extend the use of the concept to cover this, or to close the concept and invent a new one to deal with the new case” (*Ibid.*, 31, original emphasis). Conversely, he defines a concept as closed if “necessary and sufficient conditions for [its] application ... can be stated”, adding “this can happen only in logic

⁴ See Weitz 1956, 27, where he states his opposition to the view that “[u]nless we know what art is [i.e., can give a definition of it], we cannot begin to respond to it adequately or to say why one work is good or better than another.” On this point, at least, he and Lopes agree.

or mathematics where concepts are constructed and completely defined. It cannot occur with empirically-descriptive and normative concepts unless we arbitrarily close them by stipulating the range of their uses” (*Ibid.*).

Whether or not Weitz is right to claim that concepts can never be completely defined outside of logic and mathematics, it only matters for his argument that the concept of art is inherently open. He argues that we cannot give an exhaustive list of the conditions for correctly applying the concept of art because art-making is an activity in which genuinely new works and new art forms are always being created, with it being part of the practice that “unforeseeable or novel conditions are always forthcoming or envisageable” (*Ibid.*). Accordingly, the conditions that warrant our taking something to count as an instance of the concept ‘art’ “can never be exhaustively enumerated since new cases can always be envisaged or created by artists ... which would call for a decision on someone’s part to extend or to close the old or to invent a new concept” (*Ibid.*, 32). In other words, it is part of what Weitz calls the ‘logic’ of the concept of art that the concept itself expands over time as new works are made so that at no point can we say that the artworks that have been made up to that point define or entail what art can or will be at some future moment in the ongoing history of the practice.⁵

This openness does not entail that just anything can count as art for us: if that were the case, there would be no sense in talking about conditions for the correct application of this concept since there would be no way to apply it incorrectly, and there would also be no sense in talking about decisions to extend the concept since it would already range over everything. However, Weitz does think we can apply the concept correctly or incorrectly from our standpoint within the history of art and that it makes sense to talk of our choosing to extend the concept to include works that it had not formerly covered. He takes this to be based not on an essential property that all artworks share but on similarities possessed by those works that we are familiar with counting

⁵ This is very similar, if not identical, to Bergson’s point about the next great work of literature being fundamentally unforeseeable (Bergson 1920, 81-82). Although Bergson explicitly focuses on the nature of a future *artwork* being unforeseeable as a way of illustrating his idea of the universe and organic life being subject to continuous modification and expansion, Weitz’s point is that, just as Bergson takes the emergence of new life forms to change what life *is* by adding to what it *can be*, new artworks can change what art is by expanding what art can be.

as art and those works that we choose to expand the concept to include. Following Wittgenstein's argument for the impossibility of finding any set of properties shared by all the things to which we apply the concept 'game', Weitz contends that we can see that the concept of art is similar by attending to how it is employed: "If we actually look and see what it is that we call 'art'", he writes, "we will also find no common properties—only strands of similarities" (*Ibid.*, 31).

These strands of similarities ground the conditions for our correctly applying the concept, where our calling something 'art' will be mistaken if there is no continuity between it and other things we call art, i.e., if the thing in question is not similar in some relevant respects to existing cases that we uncontroversially count as art. This also grounds the conditions for the warranted extension of the concept, with decisions to count new cases as art being warranted so long as this extends the 'strands of similarity' that run through already accepted cases and so maintains a continuity with the previous extension of the concept. "Because work $N + 1$ (the brand new work) is like A, B, C ... N in certain respects—has strands of similarities to them—the concept is extended and a new phase of [art] is engendered" (*Ibid.*, 32). While Weitz is not explicit here, it follows that practitioners would be warranted in rejecting an attempt to extend the concept to a new case that lacked any relevant similarities to currently accepted instances and hence would introduce a sharp break in our application of the concept rather than maintaining continuity.

That Weitz's argument does not pose a problem for my project, despite its being more restrictive than Lopes's, can be seen by noting what he means by 'theory' when he argues that it is impossible to formulate a theory of art. Here, a 'theory' is understood as an attempt to account for the nature of something by defining it, with 'defining' being a matter of stating individually necessary and jointly sufficient properties of that thing that make it what it is. In other words, Weitz's argument is not directed against the possibility of anything we might call a 'theory of art' broadly speaking—e.g., an account that characterizes art in a certain way—but is specifically directed against attempts to formulate an *essentialist definition* of art. Weitz himself can be read as offering a 'theory' of art in the very broad sense: viz., that art is a practice or activity that is inherently open in the ways noted above; that it has an "expansive, adventurous character" that

involves “ever-present changes and novel creations” (*Ibid.*), etc. We might even take Weitz to be claiming that it is part of the nature or essence of art to be open to growth and novelty in the ways outlined above, with individual works having the necessary property of sharing ‘strands of similarities’ with at least some other artworks, where this would not be in tension with his argument since these claims do not amount to a definition of *what* art is.

We can also note what Weitz thinks that aesthetics *can* do, and what he says theories of art are good for, in light of what he thinks aesthetic theorizing cannot do. Near the end of the essay he states that “[t]he primary task of aesthetics is not to seek a theory *but to elucidate the concept of art*”, where he sees this as a matter of getting clear on how we use or apply this concept in our practices, such as how we talk about art. And he thinks that theories of art are useful in this task of clarification, despite failing as definitions, since they draw our attention to elements that are central to many artworks without being definitive of all. “Thus,” he writes, “the role of the theory is not to define anything but to use the definitional form, almost epigrammatically, to pinpoint a crucial recommendation to turn our attention” to these elements, which might otherwise go overlooked or under-recognized (*Ibid.*, 35).

Hence, while ‘theories’ of art that aim to state an exhaustive set of necessary and sufficient conditions for something being art—i.e., that aim to reduce art to a biconditional—may have been shown to be impossible or at least have been problematized by Weitz, *accounts* of art that characterize it in terms of certain central aspects of the concept or elements of many artworks and artistic practices are not only still possible but are welcome. My project does not amount to a theory of art in Weitz’s sense of the term, since my aim is to develop the basis of an account that discloses certain aspects of the nature of art in order to give us a broader, more synoptic understanding of art in general that can usefully illuminate features of artworks and of artistic practices, not to give an essentialist definition of art. Thus, Weitz’s argument not only does not pose a problem for my project: rather, it turns out to be very much in line with my approach.

Now that the apparent challenges from Lopes and Weitz have been shown not to pose a problem for my project of developing an account of art, since the former rests on an invalid

argument and the latter turns out to be compatible with my project, I can proceed to set out the basics of this account. I briefly return to Lopes and Weitz in the next chapter in order to consider how my account measures up to the former's desiderata for theories of art and meets the latter's requirement that any understanding of art takes into account its openness.

5.2 Outlining the Synthesized Account

This section outlines the fundamentals of the account of art that results from synthesizing the ideas from Collingwood, Dewey, Bergson, and de Beauvoir that are discussed in Part I. The focus here is on the ontological elements of this account—i.e., on what art is, where this should be understood to be a matter of what *artworks* are—with the value-based elements of the account to be discussed below in Chapter 7. Although I think that this account and Dewey's theory of art in *Art as Experience* are consonant, especially in how both conceive of expression and in how they make this notion central to art, for the sake of simplicity and scope I will draw only on his ideas of inquiry and qualitative thought as discussed in Chapter 2.⁶

5.2.1 Finding a Common View of Art in Collingwood, Dewey, Bergson, and de Beauvoir

The common understanding of art that can be found in Collingwood's aesthetics—when read through the lens of Dewey's notions of inquiry and qualitative thought—, in Bergson's analogies between artistic and biological creation, and in de Beauvoir's writings on literature is best characterized in terms of four interrelated elements. These are: (i) a view of expression as being central to what artists do and to what artworks are, with expression being understood as a matter of articulating or disclosing an aspect of experience rather than as the resemblance or arousal of an emotion as per the traditional, Romantic conception of expression; (ii) the view that art-

⁶ This choice not to explicitly draw on Dewey's aesthetics is partly due to the strong similarities between his theory and Collingwood's when the latter is understood along the lines that Ridley has argued for (cf. Eldridge 2010), and for which I argue in Chapter 2, rather than as the Ideal Theory of Wollheim's reading. As such, it would be largely redundant to engage here with both Dewey's aesthetics and Collingwood's, so understood, since many of the points I would be drawing from these theories would overlap or repeat. Exploring the compatibility between their theories and teasing out where their views differ will be work for a future project; for now, the points I draw on from Collingwood's aesthetics, especially concerning expression, can also be understood as broadly Deweyan.

making, as a kind of inquiry, is a process of discovery through which we come to better know and understand aspects of both the world and ourselves; (iii) a view of artworks as creations in the robust sense of genuinely new entities that artists bring into being, thereby expanding reality or adding to the ‘furniture of the world’; and (iv) the view that art is connected with human freedom, both as the free exercise of our abilities as conscious beings to disclose things as meaningful and to do or create things that are contingent, and as a way of increasing the freedom of others—i.e., audience-members—by expanding their cognitive and affective horizons, introducing new forms of awareness or ways of ‘taking’ things that give us new affordances for action and new ways of situating ourselves within our experiences. In this section I expand on each of these four elements of the common view while noting the common metaphysical framework that underlies the account these four thinkers share.

In contrast to the understanding of expression found in the 19th century Romantics and in Tolstoy, according to which an artist first has a feeling or an emotion which she then ‘expresses’ by making something that displays this feeling so as to arouse it in others who see, hear, or otherwise encounter what she has made, the account of expression proposed by Collingwood involves developing what is felt pre-consciously through interacting with a medium in which the feeling is given form or ‘embodied’, thereby allowing us to become conscious of the character of this feeling. Another distinction between the Collingwoodian and Romantic understandings of expression is that the former takes ‘feeling’ to refer to the qualitative felt element of any experience—i.e., what it is like to have—and so is broader than the latter, which focuses on already worked-out or developed emotions such as happiness, sadness, pride, shame, etc. By enabling us to apprehend and conceptualize, or understand, this feeling, expression in this sense is a matter of articulation where the artist’s creative process, taken as an action, is one of *articulating* in and through a medium and where the resulting form that is embodied in that medium, taken as an object, can be called *an articulation* of this feeling, since it further articulates or enables the apprehension of this feeling by others who encounter it, just as written words articulate ideas to readers.

On this understanding of expression, the feeling that is expressed develops or emerges—or, etymologically, is ‘pressed forth’—from the interaction between the artist and the world and so can be said to be the expression of her experience in the Deweyan sense of ‘experience’ as just such an interaction. This includes both the artist’s experience of her environment, ‘physical’ and ‘social’, before she begins to engage with her medium and her experience working in and with that medium, where this engagement mediates, or influences and shapes, the former experience: for instance, drawing what we see changes how we see it, writing fiction as a way of working out how we feel about some event affects our perception of it, etc. Consider an artist looking out of a train window who is struck by the landscape outside and who begins to sketch it as a way not only to preserve it but, as she might say, to ‘see it more clearly’, i.e., to get a clearer understanding of just what about it has struck her and makes it stand out from other landscapes she has seen (cf. *PA*, 303-04). The artist can be said to be expressing the felt quality of both her visual experience of the landscape—which, as per Dewey, can be understood as an interaction between her *qua* organism and the landscape *qua* environment—and her experience of interacting with her medium as she sketches: e.g., of putting pencil to paper to produce visual forms that she continually compares with what she sees in front of her, adding to or emending what she has drawn as she goes based on her experience of these visual comparisons.⁷

Expression, as bringing the character of a pre-intellectual experience to conscious awareness by articulating it in a medium, is a form of what de Beauvoir calls the disclosure of being, i.e., the revealing of things and events as meaningful for us within the human world.⁸ For de Beauvoir, as conscious beings we are inherently disclosive insofar as consciousness is always consciousness of something and insofar as intending an object of consciousness involves taking a perspective on it in which it has some meaning for us. Our inherent disclosiveness is related to

⁷ This example is based on someone I sat next to on a trip from Montreal to Toronto in 2015 or 2016 who began to draw the view outside. When, with my dissertation in mind, I asked her if she could talk about why she was drawing and whether this idea of drawing as a way of getting clearer on the nature of her visual experience made sense to her, she agreed wholeheartedly with the interactive and articulative notion of expression described above.

⁸ ‘Human world’ here refers to what Husserl (1978) calls the *Lebenswelt* or ‘life-world’, which largely corresponds to what Sellars (1963) calls the ‘manifest image’ and what Scruton (1997) calls the ‘intentional realm’. See *EA*, 74.

what she sees as the ‘ambiguity’ of our existence as both transcendent and immanent, i.e., as beings that are both conscious or ‘minded’ and material or embodied, where we are *in* the (material) world but not entirely *of* it. In her terms, this means that we do not ‘coincide with being’—i.e., with the world and the things that we intend as objects of consciousness—but are always to some degree separated from it: however, this separation is what lets us have a perspective on things and relate to them in a way in which they have meaning and value for us (*EA*, 11-12); as she puts it, “the world becomes present by [our] presence in it” (*Ibid.*, 23).

While we are always disclosive in virtue of simply being conscious, de Beauvoir holds that we can disclose being inauthentically, i.e., passively and automatically, taking the things and meanings we are conscious of as ‘given’ or ‘already out there’ as mind-independent features of the world, or we can do it authentically, i.e., by willing this disclosure and taking responsibility for the meanings and values that things show up as having for us (*EA*, 23-24; see also Arp 2001, 66-67). In this, her understanding of disclosure differs from Heidegger’s use of this term⁹ since for Heidegger what Dasein discloses is always already there, concealed and waiting for Dasein to uncover it, as it were, whereas for de Beauvoir meaning is not ‘there’ in the world until consciousness gives the world a meaning, with our presence to the world and our conscious intending of it bringing the disclosed meaning into existence. This active, creative sense of disclosure is seen most clearly in a passage from the opening of her novel *She Came to Stay* (1943) in which her protagonist walks alone at night through the empty theatre where she works:

When she was not there, the smell of dust, the half-light, the forlorn solitude, all this did not exist for anyone; it did not exist at all. Now that she was there the red of the carpet gleamed through the darkness like a timid night-light. She exercised this power: her presence revived things from their inanimateness; she gave them their color, their smell... It was as if she had been entrusted with a mission: she had to bring to life this forsaken theatre filled with darkness... She alone released the meaning of these abandoned places. She was there and they belonged to her. The world belonged to her.” (de Beauvoir 1943, 12)

⁹ While they are both translated in English as ‘to disclose’, de Beauvoir’s original term is *dévoiler*, which works as a French translation of Heidegger’s *erschliessen*, since both have the sense of unveiling or uncovering. See Gothlin 2003 for more on the relation between de Beauvoir’s and Heidegger’s versions of disclosure.

While it would be easy to mistake this for a kind of idealism, for de Beauvoir consciousness does not create reality; rather, what it discloses is the meaning things can have for us as the kind of organisms we are, where this includes our apprehending parts of our perceptual manifold as objects that are distinguished in terms of our capacities for action as embodied beings. This is compatible with Collingwood's view of consciousness or imagination as apprehending the field of our psychical experience—i.e., our direct, embodied contact with the world, registered affectively—in terms of objects that it then distinguishes from other objects, as well as with Dewey's view of our conscious experience, including the objects we perceive, as arising from the interaction of organism with world. Moreover, like Collingwood and Dewey, de Beauvoir takes our disclosure of being to be mediated by, and to emerge from, our interaction with the world we disclose: as she writes, “man does not create the world. He succeeds in disclosing it only through the resistance which the world opposed to him” (*EA*, 28).

Since artistic expression, as understood here, is a deliberate articulation of the qualitative component of an experience, it can be seen as an active disclosure of what might otherwise be only passively or automatically disclosed by our pre-reflective experience of things, i.e., as a form of self-conscious or ‘second order’ awareness of the nature of our ‘first order’ conscious experiences. As such, artistic expression can be connected to what de Beauvoir calls the willed or authentic disclosure of being, with successful expressions—i.e., good artworks—having the capacity to model for us what it is to exist authentically as self-conscious creators of new ways of feeling or experiencing the world. De Beauvoir explicitly attributes this capacity to art, writing that art is especially capable of disclosing reality as it is experienced “in the living relation that is action and feeling before making itself thought” (*LM*, 275) by going beyond the pre-formed ideas of things that she associates with the domain of “the theoretician” (*Ibid.*, 270) to present us with the way things are in pre-intellectual, i.e., concrete, experience, which she takes to include both the singularity and the temporality of what is experienced (*Ibid.*, 274).

This emphasis on the particularity and temporality of experience, and the idea that art can make these dimensions of experience graspable by consciousness where intellectual accounts, framed in terms of general and static concepts, cannot, connects de Beauvoir's views to Dewey's notions of qualitative thought and what he calls perception as opposed to mere recognition (see *AE*, 24) and to Bergson's notion of intuition. As we saw in Chapter 3, Bergson takes intuition to be an awareness of things that is "lived rather than represented" (*CE*, 175, emphasis removed) through which we become conscious of things as they are 'from the inside' by thinking along with them in their duration, thereby allowing us to be conscious of processes, changes, dynamic relations, singularity, and other vital or temporal aspects in ways that go beyond—or perhaps come before—the abstracted and static concepts of intelligence (*Ibid.*, 199-200). Bergson takes this to give us an awareness of things that is not relative to our purposes and interests, as distinct from normal perception which he takes to have developed primarily to serve practical needs and to facilitate our actions on and reactions to our environments (*Ibid.*, 12). He associates intuition with the kind of attention that artists pay to their subjects, calling this an "aesthetic faculty" we have alongside normal perception and characterizing the intuition-based philosophy he advocates as "an inquiry turned in the same direction as art" (*Ibid.*, 177).

The association of intuition with art is even more explicit in "The Perception of Change" where, in response to skepticism about a faculty of intuition over and above perception, he appeals to artists as concrete examples of people who employ such a faculty and thereby enlarge our awareness beyond what normal perception gives. Through the way they attend to the world and express the awareness gained through this attention in their works, artists, he writes, can "see and ... make us see what we do not naturally perceive", with artists being able to see more of reality because they attend to and contemplate things without the "blindness" that usually focus our attention on practical matters, i.e., those relating to action (*CM*, 112-13). Bergson writes that when artists look at a thing—or, we might add, when anyone looks at something in the way that is characteristic of good artists, i.e., with intuition enhancing ordinary perception—they do so with detachment or disinterest, "see[ing] it for itself and not for themselves ... It is therefore a

much more direct vision of reality that we find in the different arts; and it is because the artist is less intent on utilizing his perception [read: for utilitarian ends] that he perceives a greater number of things” (*Ibid.*, 114). Some of these things include moods, emotions, and thoughts—i.e., ways of conceptualizing things—that Bergson takes to be implicit in experience and of which he takes artists to be “the revealing agent[s]” (*Ibid.*, 112) who make them explicit.

As this discussion shows, a common idea of art as expressing or disclosing the felt meaning or qualitative dimension of experience so as to let us apprehend more of things in their concrete particularity than we can grasp through intellectual understanding and practical, everyday perception, can be found in Collingwood—especially when read in light of Dewey’s idea of qualitative thought—, de Beauvoir, and Bergson. The philosophical interest here goes beyond merely noting this compatibility, since taking their views together in a synthesis clarifies the ways in which artistic expression, on this shared view, is both a process of creation and one of discovery. Moreover, since these thinkers each take experience to be an interaction between an organism or embodied being and its environment from which both the subject and objects of experience emerge, rather than endorsing a classical empiricist or Cartesian account of experience as something a subject has of a pre-existing object,¹⁰ reading them together helps to make clear that what art expresses, on this view, is ultimately our relation to the world, which positions art to reveal or disclose elements of both our world and ourselves.

That artworks are creations in a robust sense, being novel ‘entities’ that artists bring into existence over and above any re-arrangement of pre-existing materials that might be involved in their making,¹¹ is implicit in Collingwood’s insistence that feelings are always unique particulars and that, as such, the successful expression of a feeling will result in “a certain thing” and not

¹⁰ Cf. *LM*, 270: “the meaning of an object ... is the object as it is disclosed to us *in the overall relation we sustain with it*, and which is action, emotion, and feeling”; and *EA*, 20: “the meaning of a situation *does not impose itself on the consciousness of a passive subject* ... it surges up only by the disclosure which a free subject effects in his project” (my emphases).

¹¹ This does not mean that artworks are created *ex nihilo*: both Collingwood and Bergson deny this (*PA*, 128-30; *CM*, 112). Rather, they are in continuity with, but are not determined by and cannot be deduced from, what has come before, being new developments of earlier stages of the world or some part of it, just as, on Bergson’s account, a new organ or species is a new addition to reality, not just a rearrangement of existing matter but something that develops as part of reality’s ongoing evolution or becoming.

just “a thing of a certain kind” (*PA*, 158-59, 113-14). Moreover, since it is also his view that an initial psychical feeling is developed by the artist’s imaginative or expressive activity into what he calls an emotion for consciousness (*Ibid.*, 209-10), it follows that by expressing a unique but un-worked-out feeling or quality, an artist develops it into a similarly unique form of feeling or quality that, had she not gone through this process of expressing it, would not have existed but would have remained unrealized at the psychical or pre-conscious level of experience. That is, the artist’s expressive activity can be said to create the particular feeling or quality that is expressed *in the form in which it is expressed* even though it does not create the initial psychical experience of which the expressed feeling is a development, analogously to the way that, e.g., selective breeding by humans has created certain types of dog although it did not create the ancestral breeds whose cross-breeding led to these new lines.

It is easier to see this implication of Collingwood’s account when it is read together with Bergson and de Beauvoir, who are more explicit about taking artworks and the meanings that we disclose to be creations in this sense. We have already seen that, in contrast to Heidegger’s understanding of disclosure as uncovering meanings that are always already there, de Beauvoir takes our disclosure of being to give it the meaning that we disclose it as having for us. Thus, if we take what Collingwood calls the expression of a feeling or qualitative element of experience to involve the disclosure, in de Beauvoir’s sense, of this feeling or quality, it will follow that although artists do not create the experiences whose qualitative dimensions they express, they create the expressed qualities that their audiences encounter as these are worked out and embodied in a medium. Likewise, Collingwood’s distinction between art craft and his argument against the technical theory of art can be read in light of Bergson’s example in “The Possible and the Real” of the unforeseeability of “the great dramatic work of tomorrow” prior to its being written (*CM*, 81-82). This shows how Collingwood’s rejection of the idea that artworks are ends to which means can be worked out in advance of their making can be read as entailing that not only the technical theory of art is mistaken but that artworks are not only unforeseeable—i.e., epistemically unavailable to us—but are genuinely new objects that do not exist, even as ideas,

prior to their realization: in Bergson's terms, unmade artworks not only do not yet exist but are not yet possible, with artists "in executing [their] work ... creating the possible as well as the real" (*Ibid.*, 84).

That artworks are creations on this view is compatible with their also being discoveries. As Margaret Simons notes, for de Beauvoir "an authentic metaphysical novel", i.e., one that discloses the felt meaning that things have for us as we encounter them in experience, "must be a process of discovery for the author as well as the reader" (Simons 2004, 265), with this being extendable to artworks of all kinds. The idea is that if a novel or other sort of artwork results from its creator executing a pre-formed plan or communicating an already-formulated idea, it will not be meaningful in the way that things and events are in experience where their meanings and our realization of them are contextual and unfold in time and, for de Beauvoir, always have a degree of ambiguity and opacity. On the other hand, a novel or artwork that results from its author undergoing a process of discovery that parallels the reader or audience's process of apprehending the work in time will be able to capture the meaning and feel of experiences, which are always in some sense new to the one experiencing them; this is why de Beauvoir writes that "[a] novel is endowed with value and dignity only if it constitutes a living discovery for the author as for the reader" (*LM*, 271). Moreover, such a process of discovery will allow the work to disclose aspects of reality that are new both for the artist and for the audience: as she goes on to explain, in such a process, "as the story unfolds, [the novelist] sees truths appear that were previously unknown to him, questions whose solutions he does not possess" (*Ibid.*, 272).

Art-making is also a form of discovery on Collingwood's account, which takes expression to be a matter of finding out just what it is that one feels, where this is unknown before it is expressed. This is especially clear when, as argued in Chapter 2, Collingwoodian expression is taken to be an instance of Deweyan inquiry according to which expression will not only be a discovery of a specific feeling that one has. Since what is clarified is a dimension of one's experience, it is both a discovery of something about the world and of something about oneself, e.g., about the felt qualities that things can have and our capacities for feeling or apprehending

them. In Dewey's terms we can say that the result of any inquiry is not just knowledge of an object but knowledge of our situation, i.e., of the object in our relation to it and of our relation to the object. Since what one discovers through expressing is not just something that is new to one—i.e., newly known—but, as a creation, is also a new 'thing' that the process of expression brings into being, we can go further and say that this is a discovery of a novel way of relating to things: a new *way* of feeling or experiencing and not just a new feeling or experience.

This last point relates to the way that art, on this view, is connected with freedom since the artist's creation-*cum*-discovery of a way of experiencing the world, or what de Beauvoir would call a new way of intending it as meaningful, expands the cognitive and hermeneutic horizons and the available ways of being-in-the-world of both the artist and those audience members who apprehend her work. It is no coincidence that this is the way Bergson takes intuition to extend perception and thereby to expand consciousness (see *CM*, 110-11; *CE*, 239-40). This expansion of our ways of intending and registering meaning in the world in turn expands the ways we have of relating to things, which, in Deweyan terms, could be said to add not only to our cognitive horizons but to the very situations that comprise our fields of experience. Enlarging experience in this way (cf. *PA*, 27) increases our freedom by giving us a greater range of ways to understand or interpret things around us, the situations we are in, and ourselves, which in turn increases the affordances available for us in these situations including our possibilities for action. Art can thus be said to open up the worlds of those who engage with it, where this will be discussed further in Chapter 7 in connection with the value of art.

5.2.2 Can Artworks be Both Created and Discovered?

Before turning to see how the view discussed above can give us a definition of 'artwork', I should address a potential worry about the notion of 'creative discovery' that is common to the four thinkers I draw on and which is thus central to the synthesized account I am developing. The worry is that the concepts of creation and discovery cannot be combined such that something is both created and discovered by the same person: we say that Newton discovered that white light

is comprised of a mixture of colours but not that he created this property of light, and that Bell invented or created, rather than discovered, the telephone. *Prima facie*, the difference between these concepts is that we take someone to have created something when he or she is causally responsible for first bringing it into existence where it did not exist prior to its creation, whereas we take something that is discovered to have existed prior to its discovery with its discoverer being the first to know of it—or perhaps the first to make knowledge of it public—but not to be responsible for its existence. Moreover, the debate in analytic philosophy of art between those who take artworks—particularly works of music—to be created and those who take them to be discovered presupposes something like this distinction, assuming that artworks can either be creations or discoveries but not both.¹² How then, one might wonder, can we coherently take artists both to create and to discover the works they make?

It seems obvious that creation is a matter of bringing something new into being, so a person can create something only if it did not previously exist. However, the converse does not hold as obviously for the concept of discovery: even if much of our everyday talk of discovery is of someone finding a pre-existing object or learning a pre-existing fact, it is not as clear that the concept of discovery necessarily implies the prior existence of what is discovered. While one can discover something that *was* the case, or something that *is* already there but which has not yet been found, it is equally coherent to talk of someone discovering something that does not yet exist prior to the moment when it is discovered. For example, a spy might eavesdrop on a conversation in order to discover what the two parties will say to each other, where the spy's discovery of what they say coincides with their saying it. Thus, it seems possible for some things that are discovered to come into being at the same moment they are discovered.

Of course, in this example the spy does not create what is said, but there is no clear reason to think someone cannot themselves make something happen or bring something into being—i.e., create it—in order to discover it. For instance, someone might deliver false news in order to

¹² For the view that musical works are created by their composers, see especially Levinson 1980, Fisher 1991, and Predelli 1995. For the opposing view that musical works are abstract objects—viz., sound structures—that their composers discover, see especially Kivy 1983, Kivy 1987, Dodd 2000, Dodd 2002, and Dodd 2007.

discover how his interlocutor will react, where the speaker can be said both to create the other person's reaction—at least insofar as the speaker was causally responsible for it occurring as it did, and insofar as the reaction was automatic rather than willed on the part of the other person¹³—and to discover it. Other examples might include creating an experience for ourselves—e.g., by setting up a situation that we then place ourselves in—to discover how this experience will feel, or discovering just what we think about some subject by developing our thoughts through writing or talking them out. The latter case, which is likely to be especially familiar to academics, is described by William James: “As I now write,” he notes, “I ‘strive’ after words *which I only half prefigure*, but which, when they have come, *must satisfactorily complete the nascent sense I have of what they ought to be*” (James 1910, 1090, my emphasis). Thus, it seems possible for something to be both created—i.e., brought into existence—and discovered by the same person.

Some might object here that ‘how the interlocutor will react’, ‘how an experience will feel’, or ‘what I think about this’ refer to pre-existing dispositions of the people or objects in these examples: e.g., a disposition of the interlocutor to react in a certain way when so prompted, a disposition of the object of the experience one sets up to be experienced in such-and-such a way—or perhaps a disposition for oneself to experience it as such, or both together—, or my ‘unconscious’ thoughts on the subject in question. The objection would be that this disposition is what the people in these examples discover by triggering or activating it but that it is not something that they create. However, in the first two cases this overlooks the fact that what is discovered is the person's reaction to the news on that occasion, and the feeling that one experiences, respectively, but not a disposition of theirs to react or feel in the ways they do. Still, one might further object that it is not the disposition that is discovered but that it is the

¹³ The suggestion that the speaker *creates* his interlocutor's reaction here might strike some as odd; however, I suspect that this would be due to taking objects rather than events to be one's paradigm examples of what can be created, or to thinking that someone has to be the only cause of something to count as its creator. Cf. *PA*, 128, where Collingwood discusses the ways we speak of disturbances, organizations, feelings (“international distrust”), or group behaviour (e.g., consumer demand) as being created. It seems just as natural to speak of someone's behaviour ‘creating’ a reaction as it does to speak of them as ‘creating a scene’ or ‘creating a disturbance’.

disposition that ‘creates’, or is responsible for, the reaction rather than the person who triggers it. In the third case, which is closer to what is going on in the claim that artists discover how they feel by expressing themselves, it might be objected that the act of writing does not create the thoughts that are expressed in what is written but that these thoughts were already there in the ‘nascent sense’ James refers to, which he admits to partly ‘prefiguring’. Likewise, with artistic expression it might be claimed that the feeling that is said to be discovered is not what the artist creates but something that was present in their unconscious or ‘psychical’ experience, and that the act of expression only brings it to consciousness.

One way to respond to this objection would be to soften the claim and maintain that art-making is both a process of creation and one of discovery, but that what an artist creates is not identical to what she discovers. Just as we might say that Bell created (but did not discover) the telephone and, in so doing, discovered (but did not create) a way of communicating over long distances, we could say that an artist, in creating a new perceptible form or a new arrangement of materials, discovers a pervasive quality or a feeling—or perhaps a certain *way of* feeling, a *way of* perceiving or experiencing something, etc.—which this created form embodies. As long as the artwork is not identified with only one of these but is defined as a complex of which these are both aspects—i.e., that an artwork is the form resulting from a certain arrangement of materials *plus* the quality or way of feeling that it expresses—we could still say that artists are creators and discoverers without having to say that artworks themselves are either created or discovered but not both. However, this response would get away from the view that is shared by Bergson and de Beauvoir, and which can be seen to be held by Collingwood and Dewey when they are read alongside the former two thinkers, which maintains the stronger position that what is discovered is also created.

To defend the plausibility of this stronger claim, I would note that the objections presuppose certain metaphysical commitments that, while they may be commonly held, are not obviously or necessarily true, and that these positions are at odds with the holistic, or ‘ecological’, and processual metaphysics of the thinkers on which I am drawing. In other words, whether or not

one accepts that something can be both created and discovered, and that one can ‘create’ a thought or a feeling that one has by working it out, will depend on one’s broader metaphysical commitments. This includes whether one takes dispositional properties to be things that objects or people ‘have’ that exist even when they are not realized in action. An ontology that includes dispositions, so understood, or sees actions and behaviour as the playing-out of ‘potentials’ that exist prior to their realization, would seem to have an element of ‘Platonism’ to it; at least, this seems to be just as much an instance of ‘Platonism’ as the view, held by Peter Kivy and Julian Dodd, that musical works are sound structures that exist eternally.¹⁴ Similarly, the claim that a feeling exists before it is expressed, or that a thought exists before it is articulated, with the expression or articulation simply bringing to consciousness what already was, assumes the existence of what we can call ‘ideal blueprints’ of the expressed feeling or the articulated thought to which these correspond.

Both assumptions are at odds with the broadly Bergsonian metaphysical position that Collingwood, de Beauvoir, and Dewey share to various extents and in which their claims about art are grounded. In his essay “The Possible and the Real”, Bergson argues against the view that “the possibility of things precedes their existence”, writing that this treats possibilities as if they were entities that could be “stored up in some cupboard reserved for possibles” (*CM*, 81), which view he sees as a vestige of Platonism (*Ibid.*, 85). His ultimate criticism of this view is that it is unable to account for change, novelty, and evolution—and so, for genuine creation as opposed to the mere rearranging of existing parts¹⁵—, since it assumes a picture of reality in which “the image of tomorrow is already contained in our actual present”, being “there from all time, a phantom awaiting its hour” (*Ibid.*, 82),¹⁶ and in which every process of evolution or change is merely “the realization of a program” rather than the generation of unforeseeable novelty (*Ibid.*, 85). Instead, Bergson’s position is that the universe is continually realizing new forms and states,

¹⁴ For this view, see again the sources cited in footnote 12, above, for Kivy and Dodd.

¹⁵ See *CM*, 76-77; cf. Collingwood’s distinction between creation and technical making, or craft (*PA*, 127-29).

¹⁶ Note that this criticism would apply to Kivy’s and Dodd’s countenancing of ‘eternal sound structures’.

where how the universe or some part of it is at any moment in its development is not only unforeseeable (i.e., epistemically unavailable in advance) but is genuinely novel, developing from but not being determined by what has come before it. And he takes living beings, as essentially durational, to “continually elaborate[e] what is new” by “searching” and “groping” through the world, whereby they create new forms and orders out of what they find (*Ibid.*, 75).

On this metaphysical outlook it is coherent to speak of something as being both created and discovered, since for Bergson the realization of a new form is what makes that form possible as opposed to it being the carrying-out of a pre-existing possibility (*Ibid.*, 81-82);¹⁷ thus, the discovery of the possibility—e.g., of a possible way of experiencing or feeling something—can coincide with its first realization—e.g., an artist coming to experience or feel something in this new way through her activity of expressing. However, it could still be objected that even if we do not take possibilities (or dispositions, potentials, etc.) to exist prior to their realization or activation, talk of someone expressing themselves as a way of discovering what they feel only makes sense if what is discovered through the process of expression is something they felt prior to the expression.

To get around this objection we can note that it treats the feeling(s) in question as two temporally distinct states—the unexpressed feeling and the expressed feeling—which can either correspond or differ. This is an example of what Bergson would call an attempt to conceive of a dynamic process in the way that the intellect habitually treats inert matter, i.e., in static terms. Rather than treating the unexpressed feeling and the expressed feeling as two successive states that are either qualitatively identical or numerically distinct, we can treat them as two phases of the same process—i.e., the same activity of feeling—where the later phase, as a development of the earlier, can qualitatively differ while remaining ‘the same feeling’ insofar as it is a phase of

¹⁷ Bergson’s position is that before something’s concrete realization, e.g., in action, it is “not yet possible” but that after its realization it “*will have been possible*” (*CM*, 82, original emphasis), with the realization making it have been possible by “reflect[ing its image] behind it into the indefinite past” (*Ibid.*). While this may seem paradoxical or incoherent on the views of time that are common in analytic metaphysics, for Bergson it is not a problem to speak of the present as affecting and changing the past: as his analogy of the snowball in *Creative Evolution* shows, he takes the passage of time to add to the past and thereby to reality (see *CE*, 2; cf. Al-Saji 2004 and 2018, where she discusses the Bergsonian view of the reconfiguration of the past by—or with—the present).

the same process which changed through being expressed, just as, analogously, a caterpillar and the butterfly it becomes are qualitatively different stages of the same organism. If we cannot come to know what we feel without being conscious of it, and if the process through which we become conscious of it—i.e., expression—develops the preconscious and indeterminate affective or sensual experience into a determinate form that can be apprehended, to speak of discovering what we feel on this account can only refer to this feeling as it is apprehended by consciousness post-expression.¹⁸ And if it is the artist's process of expression that is responsible for developing the initial feeling and making it what it is as it is expressed, then the artist may also be said to create the expressed feeling, i.e., to make it develop as it does, and hence to make it what it becomes.¹⁹

Although he sometimes writes as if the feeling that an artwork expresses is identical to the psychical feeling as it is prior to expression, Collingwood actually holds the view just described, i.e., that expression changes how we experience a feeling without this entailing that there are two separate feelings, but a continuous development between the pre-expression and post-expression phases of the same process of feeling. While he occasionally notes that what is expressed is a modification of a psychical feeling for consciousness (see, e.g., *PA*, 110, 209-10), his view is seen most clearly when he writes that “we commonly think that the artist's business is to find expressions for emotions which he already feels before expressing them. But this belief cannot be true, if the expressions which he invents are appropriate to the emotions they express; for his expressions are conscious expressions, consciously invented, and these can be appropriate to emotions which themselves belong to the level of conscious experience” (*PA*, 238). Thus, what Collingwood takes artworks to express are the ways we consciously experience what we register pre-consciously at the psychical level of experience—i.e., in our direct, embodied contact with the world—, and not these psychical feelings themselves in their pre-expressed forms.

¹⁸ Cf. Taylor 1985a, 270, on the idea that feelings can change with their articulation while maintaining continuity or in a sense being one feeling that undergoes this change, rather than separate feelings pre- and post-articulation.

¹⁹ Cf. *CE*, 51: “of the road which was going to be traveled, the human mind could have nothing to say, for the road has been created *pari passu* with the act of traveling over it, being nothing but the direction of this act itself.”

The discussion above does not prove that artworks are both created and discovered; rather, it shows that this idea is coherent on the metaphysical framework that underlies the common view of art found in Collingwood, Dewey, Bergson, and de Beauvoir.²⁰ The idea of something being both created and discovered is only incoherent, I suggest, on a ‘Platonist’ metaphysical position or on one that pictures reality as what William James calls the “block universe”, according to which the basic elements of reality are eternal, with ‘new’ forms being merely the rearrangement of these elements into new orders (see James 1909, 779). Moreover, the idea that artworks are creations may only be fully coherent on the kind of processual and holistic, or ecological, metaphysical outlook that we find in Bergson’s philosophy, since such a view, on which not everything is given in advance or is determined by what is so given but on which reality is open to development, is arguably the only kind that allows for genuine novelty and creation, as Bergson argued of his own metaphysics (see, e.g., *CM*, 14-15).

While Bergson developed this metaphysical framework the most systematically, it is largely shared by the other thinkers I draw from, where the dynamic and processual orientation that can be found in Collingwood, de Beauvoir, and Dewey can plausibly be traced back to the common influence of Bergson’s thinking on theirs, although a historical analysis that shows this influence is beyond the scope of this chapter. Regardless of questions of influence, the fact that they share this orientation can be seen, e.g., when de Beauvoir writes of the transcendence she attributes to the subject as “a constantly renewed upspringing that is opposed to the fixed reality of things” (de Beauvoir 1946, 212).²¹ In Collingwood’s case, the processual orientation of his thinking is less well known, due to the work in which he discusses this directly—viz., the manuscript for the short monograph *Libellus de Generatione*—being unpublished and so largely unread. This orientation is made clear by both the organization and the argument of the manuscript, which is

²⁰ This may not be the only metaphysical framework on which it is coherent to take something as both created and discovered; cf. Wiggins 1976, who argues for the need to accept “the compatibility of objectivity, *discovery*, and *invention*” (quoted in Eldridge 2003, 731, my emphasis).

²¹ Cf. *CE*, 47: “reality appears as a ceaseless upspringing of something new.” Bergson’s frequent use of terms such as ‘upspringing’ and ‘up-surge’ to refer to the introduction of novelty through the movement of duration has likely influenced de Beauvoir’s phrasing here. For Bergson’s influence on de Beauvoir, see Simons 2003.

structured as an extended defence of an ontology of ‘becoming’ over an ontology of ‘being’. Since this work is currently unpublished it will be worth quoting two representative excerpts at length to show that he shares his processual orientation with Bergson. In his preface to the work, he writes:

My fundamental doctrine is that reality is becoming, that is to say reality not so much *is* as *happens*, which implies that the reality of mind is the process of its experience, its life, and nothing else. Nor do I admit any dualism between mind and its object such that while mind is wholly process its object can be conceived as a static whole outside it. The object is process too, and these are not two processes but one process. (Collingwood 1920, 2, original emphasis)

And, in a later passage which is interesting to compare to the line from de Beauvoir quoted above, as well as to the ‘existentialist’ outlook that she shares with Sartre, he writes that:

The doctrine that reality dies in order to live, can live only by dying, and is in death in the midst of life, is doubtless serious, and to frivolous minds upsetting: but after all, it is familiar enough and has sometimes been thought rather bracing than otherwise. It has its encouraging side. The past has no power over us: in that we died, we died to that phase of life, and struck out our new life in perfect freedom and triumphant self-determination. *Every act of ours is at once a self-immolation and a self-creation*: and if there is occasion here for tears as well as for hope, what sane man wants a philosophy that stultifies the world’s sorrow? (*Ibid.*, 56, my emphasis)²²

The processual element of his thought in his published works is more apparent in light of the ontology of becoming that he develops in the *Libellus* manuscript; however, it can be seen at certain points in *The Principles of Art*, such as where he writes that “[t]he experience of feeling is a perpetual flux in which nothing remains the same” (*PA*, 158), or in his contention that “we obtain a new kind of experience by moving as it were within the flux, so that the self and the object are (so to speak) at rest relatively to each other for an appreciable time” (*Ibid.*, 210).

²² It is worth noting that the process ontology Collingwood develops in this manuscript is closer to Bergson’s than Whitehead’s, since it rejects any view of events or processes that take these as atomic entities: on this difference between Bergson’s and Whitehead’s conceptions of process, the latter as it is expounded in *Process and Reality* (1929), see Rosenthal 1998. Moreover, Collingwood argues specifically against the adequacy of the processual elements in Hegel for escaping an ontology of ‘being’. This aspect of the manuscript, along with its contents on the whole, stand as a further challenge to the received reading of Collingwood as an Idealist and so further support my reading of his aesthetics in Chapter 2.

My main aim in this section has been to show that the claims found in both Collingwood and de Beauvoir that artists create their works and that art-making is a process of discovery on the part of the artist are consistent on the kind of metaphysical framework that they share with Bergson, and so can be brought together in a synthesis of their views, although the discussion above also clarifies a number of points about these views, especially as regards the metaphysical framework underlying this way of conceiving of art. Now that I have shown this, we can turn to consider how artworks can be defined on this synthesized account.

5.2.3 What Artworks Are: What Artists Do and Make, and What Audiences Encounter

A straightforward but tautological answer to the question ‘What is an artwork?’ is: ‘That which an artist makes and which an audience-member encounters’. While this is uninformative, it does suggest that the object of any definition of art is something that is both made and received, and that a comprehensive definition that has explanatory value will account for both aspects rather than being formulated from either the creator’s or the audience’s perspective alone. One way of approaching the initial question is to make it more precise by asking ‘What exactly does an artist make, where this is also something that an audience encounters?’

The common view found in Collingwood, Dewey, Bergson, and de Beauvoir, according to which art-making is a process of both creation and discovery that discloses or expresses some aspect of our qualitative or felt experience as it occurs prior to its interpretation in rational thought, can serve as the basis for such a definition. On this view, we can define an artwork as *the expression of a (hitherto pre-cognitive) qualitative component of an experience or set of experiences, which emerges from an artist’s intentional and directed (but not pre-meditated) interaction with a medium, and which is embodied in that medium*. This is a deliberately succinct definition that calls for further elaboration of its key concepts in order to be correctly construed. These concepts have been discussed above in the course of explicating the aforementioned thinkers’ views, but it will be useful to revisit them here in order to flesh out the definition.

‘*Expression*’ here refers both to the act of expressing and to the embodied result of this act, with act and result being taken together as phases of a single process which is the making of the work, i.e., its coming into being, or ‘becoming’, as understood on the processual, holistic, and ‘ecological’ framework underlying the definition.^{23 24} Moreover, expression is to be understood in the Collingwoodian and Deweyan sense and in line with de Beauvoir’s notion of disclosure, as these have been explained in Chapters 2 and 4, respectively, and in Section 5.2.1 above. That is, it is to be understood as an articulation that actively discloses some aspect of the world, making it available for us to apprehend—as Collingwood would say, clarifying it for consciousness—, which emerges from—or, in keeping with its etymology, is ‘pressed out’ of—the artist’s engagement with the world, in contrast to the traditional Romantic understanding of expression as the externalization of a pre-formed ‘inner’ state.

The phrase ‘*qualitative element of experience*’ refers broadly to what a sensory-affective experience, or some distinguishable part of it, *is like* to experience, including both what is experienced and how it is experienced, i.e., the way of feeling, perceiving, or otherwise ‘taking’ things involved in that instance of feeling, perceiving, etc.²⁵ These two aspects of an experience can be understood as the intentional object, or *quale*, and the manner in which it is intended, respectively, where these can be taken to mutually inform one another, where *what* is felt or perceived will allow for certain ways of being felt or perceived and where *how* something is intended or apprehended will in part shape what it ‘shows up’ as for the one experiencing it. So, what an artworks expresses (articulates, discloses, etc.), on this account, is not a ‘feeling’ in the usual sense of a general emotion such as exuberance, sadness, pride, anger, etc., so much as a

²³ Cf. *CE*, 340, where Bergson writes that “the duration of [an artist’s] work”, i.e., the time it takes her to make it, “is part and parcel of [that] work”, i.e., of what she made.

²⁴ This distinguishes the definition, and so my account, from other process-oriented approaches that understand processes to be distinct from their results or products. This distinction is analogous to that which Sandra Rosenthal draws between Whiteheadian and American Pragmatist/Bergsonian understandings of processes, where she argues that the former takes “the ultimately real things of the universe” to be “actual entities, or actual occasions”, but understands these on the model of discrete and unchanging objects, while the latter takes the constituents of reality to be dynamic ‘becomings’ and so to be themselves durational and processual (see Rosenthal 1998, esp. 272-277).

²⁵ See Collins 2013 for a discussion of this idea of ways of experiencing things (seeing, feeling, etc.) as being part of what artworks can express.

perspective on—i.e., some understanding or characterization of—a particular experience as it was felt. This experience can, of course, be one that falls under a general emotion category such as happiness, sadness, etc., but expressing it will go beyond any generalized representation to articulate and make clear just how that particular instance of the emotion was like to feel.

What artworks express, then, are not already developed, pre-interpreted emotion-types but are the sensory-affective parts of the manifold of what Collingwood calls the psychical level of experience, at which we are vaguely aware of particular qualities as they occur in what could be called our ‘phenomenal field’ but have not yet interpreted these qualities or ‘brought them under a concept’, so to speak. This corresponds to the part of reality that, for Bergson, we apprehend through intuition as well as to the second of Dewey’s three senses of ‘qualitative thought’, i.e., the pre-cognitive dimension of felt experience that we directly ‘have’ rather than ‘know’ and which forms the background for conceptual thought.²⁶ While such an element of our qualitative experience is un-cognized prior to being expressed, expressing it (articulating, disclosing, etc.) is our way of cognizing or conceptualizing it in its particularity: i.e., of apprehending it as what Collingwood calls “a certain thing” rather than merely as a “thing of a certain kind” (*PA*, 114).

Finally, ‘*embodiment in a medium*’ refers to what we might also call the ‘trace’ or ‘deposit’ of the artist’s process of working in and with the medium that facilitated her expression, where the final organization of the elements of the medium—e.g., a sculptor’s materials, the posture and movements of a dancer’s body, a filmmaker’s recorded images and sounds, a novelist’s narrative events, etc.—articulates, or gives form to, what the work expresses. It does so in virtue of being an organic unity or *Gestalt* in which the ‘parts’ of the work cohere and play off each other, being united by what Dewey calls a ‘pervasive quality’ that characterizes the work as a whole and which just is the quality that the work expresses as it has come to be apprehended or understood as a result of the artist’s process of expression.

It is easy to take the embodiment of a finished work in a medium to be a product of the process by which it came about, as distinct from this process: e.g., the physical sculpture as

²⁶ See again Chapter 3, pp. 90 and 94-95, and Chapter 2, pp. 53-56, above.

distinct from its carving; the performance as distinct from the choreographing and rehearsing; the film screened as distinct from its shooting and editing; etc. However, on the processual framework on which my account is based, to see it this way would be to isolate a phase of a continuous process and abstract it from the rest, treating it as an object and taking this to be *the* work. Although this may be necessary for many practical purposes, such as selling or exhibiting artworks, I argue that conceiving of an artwork this way will lead us to fail to properly grasp what the work is ontologically, which on my account is a process that encompasses both the expressive activities of the artist and the embodied trace thereof. Since they are ultimately phases of the same process, which is the work's creation or becoming, an artist's generative activities and the embodied form they generate must be understood in relation to each other—e.g., seeing the embodied form as the trace of the artist's activities of forming it, and seeing the artist's interactions with her medium as the creating of this form—in order to be properly or fully apprehended as a work of art.

In light of this definition and this elaboration of its central concepts, what exactly can we say it is that artists create and that audiences encounter? From the above it follows that what an artist creates is not the material object that the viewer encounters (when there is such an object), since the physical materials themselves that the artist manipulates and organizes already exist, or at least are not things that she has made rather than things she has taken up and worked with. Neither is it essentially the form into which she arranges these materials, since for some works of art—e.g., Duchamp's ready-mades—both the materials and the forms in which they are arranged already exist, while for other works—e.g., Felix Gonzalez-Torres's "*Untitled*" (*Portrait of Ross in L.A.*) (1991), or Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased De Kooning Drawing* (1953)—the exact physical arrangement or shape of the materials the artist has worked with is not artistically relevant since is not part of how these works express. Rather, on this account, what the artist creates, in the sense of bringing into existence as a new component of reality, is a *new qualitative experience*, where this includes both what may be distinguished as the intentional qualitative object of that experience, e.g., a felt or perceived quality, and *a certain way of experiencing*, e.g.,

a way of feeling, perceiving, apprehending, etc. The medium, organized into a certain form through the artist's working with it, *becomes* the embodiment or articulation of this way of experiencing, just as ink arranged in a certain way on paper becomes the sentences that embody a writer's meaning: the ink, so arranged, does not refer to but *is* the sentence.

If this is what an artist creates, and hence what the artwork is, this will also be what an audience-member encounters when apprehending an artwork. This is not merely a matter of the audience perceiving a material object that has resulted from the artist's activities—e.g., a canvas with paint on it—or seeing or hearing the perceptible elements of a performance—e.g., sounds made by musicians on their instruments—since these things can be within someone's perceptual field and so be seen, heard, etc. by that person without their apprehending what the artist created, i.e., the artwork. Apprehending an expression is less a matter of apprehending an object as it is apprehending what we can call 'a doing',²⁷ in the sense that we might say to someone "I see what you did there" as a way of letting them know that we have registered the subtext of an overt action of theirs: for instance, seeing a person's gesture as a veiled insult or critique, or seeing that someone solved another person's problem while making it look like that person had solved the problem on their own. Just as the 'subtext' in these examples can only be apprehended by seeing the 'text'—i.e., the gesture that was really an insult, or whatever it was that the person did that actually solved the problem—but where seeing this is not sufficient for registering the subtext, apprehending an artwork will be a matter of seeing, hearing, etc. something *as* an expression. Moreover, we can say that this something 'embodies' the expression in the same way that it makes sense to say that a gesture 'embodied' an insult or that a person's actions 'embody' a solution to a problem.

What is it, then, to apprehend something as an expression in the sense used here? If Collingwood is right about the particularity of expressions, what exactly this involves will vary from case to case. Nevertheless, it seems plausible that whatever it involves on a given occasion, it will be a matter of grasping the work as an organic unity or *Gestalt* by apprehending how its

²⁷ Cf. Baxandall 1986, vi, who writes of how we automatically see pictures "as products of purposeful activity".

parts cohere or are unified by what Dewey calls a ‘pervasive quality’, where this is a quality of the work as a whole in addition to whatever qualities its ‘parts’ have when taken on their own. Moreover, it will involve apprehending this *Gestalt* and its unifying quality as being the result of someone’s purposeful making—i.e., as their ‘doing’— where what they did was to express this quality through their working in and with the medium in which it is embodied. Since expressing a quality in Collingwood’s and Dewey’s sense is not essentially a matter of arousing this quality but of articulating or clarifying it and thereby allowing an audience to understand what it is like to feel this quality, apprehending an artwork *qua* expression will involve this quality being disclosed in one’s experience of the work.

At this point, it might seem that my account is in danger of opening itself to the criticism that Wollheim made against the Ideal Theory: that the theory risks separating artworks from any concrete, material objects in which they may be embodied, making the latter merely the means by which the audience can come to apprehend the ‘real’ work. Although this account does not treat artworks as ideas in people’s heads, it might look as though it treats artworks as felt qualities within people’s experiences rather than the material things that audiences directly see, hear, etc., with the ‘real’ work supervening on this experience. This worry, however, would be mistaken. On my account, the artwork is not something over and above the material object in which it is embodied (when there is such an object, e.g., in mediums such as painting, sculpture, etc.), but is this object *as intended* in a certain way: coloured pigments on a canvas seen as forming a certain arrangement, sounds heard as forming a certain rhythm or harmony, etc.²⁸ Since the embodiment in the medium of the qualitative dimension of experience that is expressed is also the trace of the artist’s process of expressing or articulating it in that medium, the expressive content of a work is apprehended in, or through, its embodiment in the same way that letters, words, and sentences are apprehended in, or through, arrangements of ink on paper. Thus, the medium in which the expression is formed and embodied not only mediates the artist’s expressive activity, and ultimately her experience, in the way that painting or drawing can

²⁸ Cf. Levinson 2011a, 12fn.6: “Every artwork is, strictly speaking, an intentioned object.”

mediate one's experience of looking at something by allowing one to see it more precisely: it also mediates the audience's apprehension of what the artist's expressive work in and with the medium has articulated or disclosed.

This puts the artist and the audience in the common position of sharing the same intentional object—the artwork—in their individual experiences. The artist, in clarifying or expressing some dimension of her qualitative experience, articulates or discloses it to herself, gaining a clearer and deeper understanding of what this experience is like. If this is a necessary occurrence for what the artist does to count as an expression, and hence for her to have created a work of art, then the creation of every artwork will involve the artist apprehending the artwork—i.e., the clarified expression of the qualitative experience, as worked out and embodied in a medium—as an intentional object at the point at which it is created, which is to say, emerges from the artist's organization of the materials of the medium, whatever this might involve in a particular case. Likewise, an audience member, in apprehending what the artist has done or made *qua* artwork, will register the articulation or disclosure that the work expresses and thereby will 'intend' the same 'object' in their experience of the work that the artist intended in hers, where this includes taking up the same way of experiencing (feeling, perceiving, etc.) that the artist developed or created through her engagement with her medium, even if this is only taken up in imagination: e.g., an audience member coming to know what it would be like to feel something by imaginatively entertaining this feeling without necessarily actually feeling it themselves.

An analogy will help to clarify this: consider what is involved in telling and understanding a joke. Here, the teller is communicating something that she takes to be funny, where this includes communicating a particular way of 'taking' the thing in question *as* funny, e.g., imagining a scenario in a certain way, or in a certain context, to bring out or disclose the humour in that scenario. A listener who understands the joke that is told will understand what the teller takes to be funny by imaginatively or cognitively adopting the same way of 'taking' whatever that joke is about: e.g., imagining the scenario in the way that the teller does, as 'embodied' in the words and the delivery of the joke. Hence, both the teller and the listener who understands can be said to

share an intentional object, being the ‘content’ of the joke, apprehended or ‘taken’ in a certain way. Another listener might hear the same words spoken by the teller, see the same body language used in the delivery, etc. but not understand the joke. Here we could say that he has heard *the words* but did not hear *the joke*, i.e., that he did not apprehend or ‘intend’ the scenario in the way the teller did, as this was expressed through her words, delivery, etc.

When it comes to artworks we can say that a viewer who apprehends a painting—say, one of Cézanne’s paintings of Mont Sainte-Victoire—as the work of art that it is will be taking up and sharing the way of seeing that the artist engaged in when creating the work, the felt quality of which the work expresses. In the case of a painting, this involves attending to—and therein *intending*—the painting itself in the way the artist did when she realized it was finished, seeing the various elements of the painting—its colours, lines, shapes, texture of paint on the canvas, etc.—as inter-relating to form a complex whole or organic unity in the way that the painter saw these elements as related to each other. Likewise, in apprehending a series of sounds as music, one registers them as relating to each other to form the melody, rhythm, etc. that the composer also intended them as; in apprehending a series of bodily movements and positions as a work of dance, one registers them as relating to each other in the way the dancer or choreographer intended them as related; etc.

While conceptual artworks might be thought to pose a challenge for this way of understanding what is involved in apprehending them, this is likely because the medium in which such works are ‘embodied’ is often not material, being an event rather than a perceptible object. For example, the point of Gonzales-Torres’s *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)* will be lost if one attempts to literally *see* the pile of wrapped candies left on the floor of the gallery displaying this work as somehow visually representing or portraying his former lover. Rather, the work here is the event of Gonzalez-Torres setting up a situation in which the audience, by taking pieces of candy from the pile, will be complicit in the pile losing its mass until it disappears, acting as an analogy for the process by which his lover—of whom the pile of candy is presented as a ‘portrait’ and whose weight the pile shares—lost weight and eventually died

from AIDS, where apprehending the interaction with the candy as this analogy is necessary for apprehending the artwork and involves coming to perceive the candy, and what will happen to it as it is exhibited, in the way that Gonzalez-Torres conceived it.

As should be clear from the context here, my talk of what the artist ‘intended’ should be understood in terms of the concept of intentionality rather than as what the artist meant to do in advance, or as a plan that she consciously or deliberately followed in making or performing the work. This gives us another way of understanding statements that are commonly made about the role of the artist’s intentions in understanding and evaluating artworks, e.g., that the criterion for a correct interpretation of a work’s meaning is the artist’s intention (see, e.g., Hirsch 1967) or that knowing an artist’s intention is irrelevant for appreciating or evaluating their work (see, e.g., Wimsatt and Beardsley 1946). Rather than taking such statements to refer to our coming to know how the artist initially envisaged the work or what she thought it meant, we can instead read them as referring to the intentional object of the artist’s experience of her work.

This solves certain problems that have attended intentionalist views in aesthetics such as the difficulty or impossibility of knowing an artist’s private thoughts about her work in order to interpret or evaluate it, or the possibility of an artist being unaware of certain dimensions of his work or mistaken about just what he has made and what it means. It is more plausible to hold that any interpretation or evaluation of an artwork must be directed to the same intentional object that the artist intended when making the work—e.g., to an arrangement of colours on a canvas as seen in a certain way, to a series of sounds as heard together in a certain way, etc.—in order for it to be a valid interpretation or evaluation, allowing that the audience or critic might see or hear more or less than the artist did while still intending the same object. This sense of intention also gives us a plausible way of construing Collingwood’s view that to understand something historically is to re-enact the historical agent’s thoughts on the basis of present evidence (see Collingwood 1946, 282-301) as applied to understanding artworks. Rather than taking re-enactment to be a matter of going through the same process of feeling and perceiving that the artist did when making the work, we can understand it as requiring only that an audience-

member experiences the work in a way such that the intentional object of the audience's experience is the same as, or contains but goes beyond, the artist's intentional object, even if the audience's process of feeling, perceiving, etc. by which this comes to be intended differs from that which the artist underwent in intending it.²⁹ On this understanding, the 'act' that is re-enacted is that of intending the object in question—i.e., the artwork *qua* expression—rather than the artist's entire creative process.

The above is meant to be a basic outline of the account of the nature of art and artworks that can be developed from synthesizing the ideas found in Collingwood, Dewey, Bergson, and de Beauvoir, with much still left to develop in future work. I have sought to show here how a viable theory of what artworks are that takes account of both what artists create and what audiences experience can be constructed from this synthesis. Since this account is ultimately a kind of expression theory of art, it will be worth addressing some objections that have been raised against expression theories generally before going on to compare my account to some other theories of art, where addressing these objections will help to flesh out and clarify my account.

5.3 Some Common Objections to Expression-based Theories

As a revitalization of the view that expression is central to art, my account will need to be able to meet the most common objections that have been raised against expression-based theories of art. Since expression-based theories have fallen out of fashion in recent decades, many of these objections are the same as those presented over half a century ago, largely in response to theories such as Dewey's and Collingwood's as well as those found in Croce and in Tolstoy's *What is Art?* (1898). Since the objections are meant to apply to Collingwood's and Dewey's theories, a

²⁹ This way of understanding what it would mean for an audience to 're-enact' what an artist experienced lets us read Collingwood's conception of historical understanding as being close to that proposed by art historian Michael Baxandall, who characterizes the process of understanding an artwork as a matter of reconstructing the problem the artist faced in making the work and the circumstances in which that problem arose, and who notes that this is not a matter of reconstructing the artist's entire experience (Baxandall 1986, 14-15). Baxandall mentions Collingwood's theory of re-enactment but takes it to be incompatible with understanding artworks on Collingwood's account; however, this alleged incompatibility rests on Baxandall's acceptance of the Wollheimian reading of Collingwood as an 'ideal theorist' (*Ibid.*, 139fn.1) which I have argued against in Chapter 2, above.

defence of my account of art will also work to counter their application to these thinkers insofar as my account shares their understanding of expression.

John Hospers's paper "The Concept of Artistic Expression" (1954-5) gives a comprehensive overview of these objections, although some are not worth addressing here since they conflate the issues of the value of art and the nature of artworks, such as the objection that not all expressions are *great* works of art (Hospers 1954-5, 146-47). Another objection that, as Hospers formulates it, also conflates value with ontology but which nonetheless applies to expression-based accounts of the nature of art is the objection that whether or not an artist expresses herself in creating a work of art is not obviously relevant for determining either the value of the work or what the work is, since it is not clear that "anything ... relating to the artistic *process* [can] be validly used as a criterion for evaluating [or identifying] the artistic *product*" (*Ibid.*, 147, my emphasis). In other words, the worry is that expression-based theories account for what occurs in the making of a work but not for what the work *is* once it exists as a complete work.

This worry arises only if one posits a sharp separation between process and product and so is not itself an objection to the account developed here, or at least not directly: rather, it is an implicit objection to the processual metaphysical framework on which this account rests, which sees the 'product' as itself a phase of the work's creation or becoming. But one does not have to endorse a processual metaphysics to respond to this worry, as we can see by adapting a point that Wollheim raises in an appendix to the second edition of *Art and its Objects* entitled "Criticism as Retrieval". Here, Wollheim argues that knowledge of what Hospers calls "the conditions under which [a] work of art came into being" (*Ibid.*), including aspects of the artist's creative process, is relevant to our appreciation and criticism of an artwork. This is because such knowledge lets us give a more comprehensive or "profounder" description of the work than we can give by attending to the work's directly perceptible properties alone, where this richer description can "include such issues as how much of the character of the work is by design, how much has come about through changes of intention, and what were the ambitions that went into its making but were not realized in the final product" (Wollheim 1968/1980, 192). For example, knowing that

Rodin's *Monument to Balzac* was begun as a nude sculpture but ended up being a sculpture of Balzac's cloaked figure with only his head uncovered, or that Dostoyevsky meant for *The Idiot*'s Prince Myshkin to "portray a totally good man", allows us to appreciate the finished sculpture in comparison to the effect a nude in the same pose and with the same head and face would have had, and to see Myshkin as a "*failed* depiction of a totally good man" (*Ibid.*, 191, my emphasis), and perhaps to appreciate the difficulties Dostoyevsky faced in trying to realize his initial aim for what they reveal about both human nature and dramatic characterization.

While Wollheim is interested in what is relevant for criticism or appreciation, his point can be extended to apply to what a work of art *is*, given that artworks are not merely physical objects but are the results of an artist's purposeful activity or 'doing'. That is, Rodin's *Monument to Balzac* is not simply a sculpted figure draped in a cloak but is (also) the result of Rodin's change of mind—i.e., not simply a cloaked figure, but a figure that *has been cloaked instead of being left nude*—, and *The Idiot* is not merely a novel with a good but flawed protagonist but is (also) a testament to the difficulty or even impossibility of someone being a wholly good person, if even an author could not make a character be this way while remaining dramatically credible. These latter descriptions more fully characterize what these artworks *are*—i.e., what it is that their artists created and that their audiences encounter—even before any consideration of their value is brought in, with someone who experiences the work in the ways described 'intending' them in a way that better coheres with the intentional objects that their creators experienced when making them. Since these descriptions rely on knowledge of the process that was involved in these works' creation, Hospers is wrong to claim that the details of a creative process are irrelevant to the identity of the work that is made through that process.

Another objection that Hospers raises is that expression theories are overly limiting with respect to what art can be, where artworks can be other things than just expressions, e.g., representations or explorations of a medium. A related worry is that even if expression is taken to be necessary for art, the focus of expression theories on feelings and emotions overlooks the other things that artworks can express, such as ideas (Hospers 1954-5, 145-46). My account

avoids the second worry since what it takes artworks to express are not feelings in the traditional sense of states of mind like happiness, sadness, etc. but the qualitative dimensions of experiences of all sorts, i.e., what it is like to have these experiences. Thus, it allows artworks to express ideas if this is taken to mean not only conveying the propositional content of an idea but also expressing the qualitative experience of thinking that idea, i.e., what it is like to have that idea in a particular context, for instance, as arising in response to a problem to which that idea is the solution.³⁰ On this understanding of expression, as distinct from the emotion-centric notion of expression found in Tolstoy and the Romantics, it is less obviously implausible to require that artworks express in addition to whatever else they do, such as representing or exploring the potential of a medium. While some merely technical representations that do not express or disclose anything about what it is like to experience what they represent—e.g., a photorealistic but mechanically executed painted portrait of a person, or a correct but literal written description of some item—might get referred to and treated as art in practice, such works would seem to be lacking something that sets certain works in these mediums apart from others as *artistic* paintings or poems. There is a plausible difference in kind between such non-expressive uses of artistic mediums and paradigm cases of art, where an artwork that represents or is the result of exploring or playing with the medium will also express the felt quality of *some* experience, where this can include the experience of working in that medium.³¹

Another pair of objections involves ways in which expression theories allegedly fail to map onto artistic practice. One is that some artists' descriptions of their own processes seem to contradict this theory, where Hospers cites Poe's 1846 essay "The Philosophy of Composition", in which Poe discusses his writing of "The Raven", as an example (*Ibid.*, 146). Another objection is that artists do not always experience the same feeling that a work of theirs expresses when they are making that work—e.g., a composer can write a melancholy or anguished song

³⁰ See *PA*, 267, for Collingwood's remarks on what he calls emotions of intellect, and his example of Archimedes's cry of "Eureka!" as expressing what it was like, in his particular situation, to think that bodies displace their weight in water.

³¹ I expand on this difference in kind between expressive and non-expressive works in conventional artistic mediums in the next section.

while feeling happy and calm—and, moreover, need not consciously experience any emotion at all while they are creating. Likewise, audiences do not need themselves to feel the emotion that a work expresses in order to appreciate that work and do not always need to feel anything while engaging with certain works that may be unemotional, e.g., the geometric grids of lines and colours of a Mondrian painting. Thus, the objection goes, since not all artistic creation is a matter of expression and since not all artworks are expressive, it is wrong to make expression central to what it is for something to count as art.

The second objection can also be countered by noting that it applies to the traditional Romantic notion of expression as the arousal in the audience of a feeling the artist felt by means of the work as a vehicle for the feeling's transmission (see, e.g., Tolstoy 1898, 40-42). However, for my account and its conception of expression as clarification and disclosure it does not matter whether an artist occurrently feels the qualitative dimension of experience that the work clarifies and discloses so long as she apprehends what it is like to have this experience by imaginatively entertaining it.³² Hence, in this sense of expression, if a work expresses the felt quality of a particular instance of a general type of emotion such as melancholy or anguish it will be true that its maker came to understand more clearly what this instance of that emotion was like to undergo, where this presupposes her imagining its undergoing in some form even if she does not imagine that she herself is feeling it. For instance, in writing *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë will have imaginatively entertained what it was like for Heathcliff (fictionally) to feel the particular love, jealousy, and desire for revenge that this character experiences in his particular situation within the narrative in order for her writing to clarify and disclose something of these

³² To clarify, the difference here is not between imagining feeling something and 'really', or occurrently, feeling it, but between forming an idea of what it is like to feel X at the level of imagination and affectively experiencing X at the level that Collingwood calls 'psychical'. The two can, but need not, go together, and hence are distinct: for example, the affective experience that one has while imaginatively entertaining what it would feel like to, e.g., lose the love of one's life due to a mistake of one's own making when watching or reading *Romeo and Juliet*, is unlikely to be identical to the affective experience one would have if one were really to lose the love of one's life in a tragic circumstance, even if both experiences could be described as feelings of sadness. Likewise, one might feel afraid while watching a scene in a horror film, but this will be a qualitatively different feeling from the fear that one would feel if one were actually in the situation depicted in the film, and not just a less intense instance of the same feeling.

feelings, but she need not have felt these things herself nor imagined herself as the one who is (fictionally) feeling them.

What I am calling ‘entertaining’ a felt quality as distinct from actually feeling it is part of what Collingwood calls the artist’s “total imaginative experience”, which goes beyond their direct perceptual and affective experiences in any given moment (*PA*, 144-48): as such, someone’s occurrent mood may be calm or happy while their imaginative experience is agitated or sad. This is also true for audience-members who need not themselves feel (or imagine themselves feeling) the qualities that a work expresses in order to apprehend these qualities, as clarified and disclosed by the work, in their imaginative engagement with it. As for the point that sometimes artists and audience-members feel nothing when creating or perceiving a work, this is only true when it comes to full-blown emotions but is false when it comes to the kinds of felt qualities that artworks, on my account, express since every experience has a qualitative dimension of this sort, i.e., something that it is like to undergo. Even if viewing a painting by, say, Mondrian or Jackson Pollock does not arouse a full-blown emotion there is nevertheless a felt quality to the viewing experience that is distinct for each painting, where the ‘feel’ of a Mondrian—i.e., what it is like to visually attend to one of his paintings—is distinct from the ‘feel’ of a Pollock, and where this qualitative dimension—here, having broadly to do with order and simplicity or complexity and chaos, respectively—can be what these paintings express as opposed to what we would ordinarily call an emotion.

With regard to Hospers’s example of Poe as an artist whose own account of his creative process seems to contradict the expression theory, the response is that such accounts need not be taken to be exhaustive characterizations of every relevant aspect of their creative processes. Instead, it is more plausible to take Poe’s description of what Hospers calls the “cold-blooded calculation” of the method by which he claims to have composed “The Raven” (Hospers 1954-5, 146) to be a partial account of select aspects of his process rather than a full account of every artistically relevant aspect of this process. This is because “The Raven” does more than simply describe a character’s emotional state or employ imagery deliberately to evoke certain feelings in

the reader: through its use of poetic form it also makes clear to the reader what the narrator's sense of loss and longing are like for him to feel, and what his unwanted but persistent obsession is like for him to experience, while disclosing something of the psychological nature of such feelings.³³ Read this way, Poe's description no more contradicts the theory that artworks clarify and disclose qualitative dimensions of experience than a sculptor's explanation of the reasons why he chose certain materials and tools does, since artworks being expressions is compatible with their making also involving what Collingwood distinguishes as 'craft'.

Similar descriptions from other artists of their working processes that Hospers might take to be in tension with expression-based theories of art could also be said not to account for what makes the works in question art as opposed to products of mere craft. Such descriptions might be reports of some of the things the artists did in the course of engaging with their medium, with this engagement facilitating their expression. It would be consistent to maintain that if a work is an artwork in the full sense, it is because it clarifies and thematizes, or discloses, the felt quality of some experience over and above whatever craft-like elements were involved in their making and which the artists have described. These artists' descriptions can therefore be taken to be true without posing a problem for expression theories of art, and if a given artist does think that such an explanation gives a full and exhaustive account of their creative process—e.g., if Poe thought this of his essay—, we can say that this artist is overlooking or is not yet consciously aware of the aspect of their work that makes it art rather than merely craft. Moreover, it is not surprising that artists would more commonly describe the technical or craft elements of their working processes rather than the elements of these processes that are expressive, since the latter are less amenable to being described in terms of means and ends and so will be less rationally explicable, with even the artists not always being able to say exactly why they made certain creative decisions other than that they 'felt right'.

³³ While Poe need not have *himself* felt the exact feelings of loss and longing that the poem expresses in order for it to be an expression in my sense—as opposed to the Romantic sense of expression, for which he would have had to feel these things himself—he will need to have apprehended what these feelings are like to feel in the course of his imaginative engagement with the poem as he was writing it in order for the poem to count as his articulation, or intentional (i.e., non-accidental) disclosure, of these feelings.

The final objection to address is the epistemological worry that, as Hospers puts it, it is not clear “how [we can] ever know for sure that the feeling in the mind of the artist was anything like the feeling aroused in a listener or observer” (*Ibid.*, 160). Put this way, the objection can be dismissed as applying to the expression theory that I am developing since this theory does not take expression to be a matter of a feeling in the mind of the artist being aroused in audience-members: once again, the objection applies to Romantic theories and to Tolstoy’s conception of expression but not to mine, nor to Collingwood’s or Dewey’s. However, the worry can be rephrased to apply to my account: it is not clear how we can know the way in which an artist intended a work in the process of creating it or whether the intentional object of the artist’s ‘total imaginative experience’ is the same as, or overlaps with, the intentional object of the audience’s experience of the work as it is embodied in its medium. For example, there is no obvious way to verify that the way in which a listener hears a collection of notes as fitting together, e.g., as having a certain rhythm, is the same as the way the composer heard them or that the relationship that a viewer registers in the visual elements of a painting is the relationship between these elements that the painter saw, etc.

While Hospers’s focus is on the implications of this epistemological worry for our ability to evaluate artworks if we take their goodness *qua* art to be a matter of their success as expressions, when it is reframed to apply to my account the worry has implications for our ability to identify artworks in the first place. Given that my account ties artworks to ways of experiencing, with apprehending an artwork being a matter not just of perceiving the form in which the work is embodied but perceiving or conceiving it *as* the artist did, if we cannot know whether our way of intending something that is presented as a work of art is the way its artist intended it we would seem never to be able to know for sure if we are apprehending *the artwork* in what we were seeing, hearing, conceptualizing, etc. A title or an artist’s statement could help to guide us in how we attend to a given work, but even with this, without some way of independently knowing how the artist intended the work—i.e., the intentional object of the experience in which she judged

her working in her medium to be complete—we have no way of being certain that even our guided attention is intending the work of art in what we see, hear, etc.³⁴

The best way to respond to this objection is to note that it not only applies to artworks as characterized in my account but to any form of communication by which one person comes to understand what another means: for instance, we can raise the same point in regards to how we can know for sure that a listener's understanding of a speaker's words and that speaker's own understanding of them are the same. Rather than taking the lack of certainty here to be a problem, we can take the requirement of certain knowledge to be unwarranted when applied to a phenomenon—human communication and understanding—that is fundamentally hermeneutic and interpretive, admitting of degrees of correctness of interpretation rather than final answers.³⁵ The epistemological point Hospers raises need not be seen as a problem for my account: instead, it points to the fact that artworks are always to some extent 'ambiguous' objects insofar as both their meaning and their identity is open to interpretation, with works being possible to intend or 'take' in multiple ways and with it being an open question whether a certain way of 'taking' a work apprehends it correctly as the artist's expression, just as written texts can be ambiguous with respect to what exactly their authors are communicating by using the words they did.

I would argue, moreover, that it is not a drawback but a virtue of my account that it leaves room for the openness and the hermeneutic dimension of artistic practice, which is a source of art's richness and, as I will argue in Chapter 7, its value. In practice, the question "How is this art?", when asked upon encountering something that is being presented as an artwork, is less

³⁴ This worry parallels what I take to be the real problem facing Collingwood's account of art, which has been overlooked given the focus on problems connected with the Ideal Theory interpretation of his account. This problem is that we are seemingly unable to know whether an effort to express a psychological feeling is successful given that we do not have access to that feeling apart from some expression of it and so we cannot compare the purported expression to that feeling to judge whether it succeeds or fails. Since my focus in this chapter is to develop the basic elements of an account of art that draws on Collingwood and other thinkers, I will not defend Collingwood's account from this problem here but leave this task for future work, although my defence of my own account against this sort of epistemological worry will likely be relevant for answering this problem given that my account incorporates many elements from Collingwood's and is broadly compatible with it.

³⁵ Cf. Aristotle's methodological point that one should not demand the same kind of precision in all types of subject-matter and that wisdom lies in knowing the degree of precision appropriate to a particular subject or kind of inquiry (Aristotle 1962, *NE* I.3 1094b13-27).

likely to be inquiring after a sufficient condition for arthood that the item in question meets but instead to be asking how we should regard, engage with, or ‘take’ the item—i.e., how we are meant to see or hear it, or what we are meant to see or hear it *as*—in order to apprehend it as the artwork it is. While the identity of some works is less in doubt than others, this is always in principle open to revision in light of new interpretations where we might gain a better understanding of just how the various elements of some publicly accessible form (a sculpted piece of bronze, a performance of bodily movement, a collection of sounds, etc.) should be taken together as forming a unity that is more than the sum of these parts, as a new creation that the work’s artist has brought into being. It also accords with practices of artistic reception insofar as artworks need to be ‘read’ when encountered rather than being immediately perceptible, which is why someone can see the arrangement of coloured shapes a painter put on a canvas or hear the collection of notes a composer instructed performers to make on their instruments but not see or hear the painting or the song *qua* artwork, which is something that takes some amount of interpretation of what is seen or heard on the part of the audience even to apprehend.

As for how we can judge an interpretation of how some item (object, event, performance, etc.) is an artwork as more or less correct, we can look to how this is done in practice where it is often a matter of which way of apprehending, or ‘intending’, the work is maximally coherent and makes the most sense of the work as a meaningful unity, both in terms of how the elements of the medium in which the work is embodied fit together and in terms of any contextual details that are known about the artist’s process, e.g., what a particular artist, in a certain phase of her career, might have been expressing by doing what she did with her medium. All else being equal, an interpretation that accounts for all the elements of the publicly accessible form, understanding these in their inter-relation to each other and to the process through which the artist created the work, and which does so in a way that these elements, when seen together in this way, articulate or disclose something of the qualitative dimension of a particular experience, can be taken to be a (provisionally) correct interpretation over one that does not account for all these elements or allow for the work to be as expressive in this sense. And we can take this as a criterion of what

will count as a better interpretation without needing to posit a maximally correct interpretation against which to measure others, and without requiring certainty as to whether this interpretation corresponds to what the artist intended.

This, of course, requires a degree of faith or trust on the part of the audience, both that there is some way in which what is presented to them as art can be apprehended or intended so as to articulate or disclose the nature of a qualitative experience, and that this way of intending it was the way in which the artist intended it, so what the work articulates or discloses when intended this way is what the artist herself articulated, or expressed, in making the work. As I argue in Chapter 7, below, this trust is part of the value that engaging with art has, where this value would be unrealized if we could verify with certainty that our way of apprehending and understanding a work was the same as the artist's, as epistemically desirable as this might be.

The above objections, which I have shown do not count against or pose problems for the account of art I am developing here, are only some of those that can be raised against expression-based theories of art. While I do not have space here to address all such objections, the way I have responded to the ones that Hospers outlines as the main worries facing expression theories can be taken to suggest how I might respond to other possible objections. Specifically, it should be noted that any objection that takes expression to be a matter of the transmission of a feeling from the artist to her audience via the artwork's arousal of that feeling in viewers, listeners, readers, etc. will not work against my account given the different conception of expression on which it is based. Instead, any objections that might potentially work against my account would have to be developed according to the understanding of expression that I am using here, which we can call *disclosive* rather than *transmissive*.

Any such objection will also have to acknowledge that my account takes expression, so understood, to be a necessary feature of art but not the only feature that might matter for understanding a particular work *qua* art, such that artworks can also be representational, can arouse emotions, etc. so long as they also express. Since some things that are referred to and treated as art in the practices of what Dickie calls 'the artworld' might not be expressive in this

way, it is worth clarifying the scope of my account and distinguishing it from the scope of Dickie's and other institutional theories, in order to pre-empt the possible objection that my account explains only to some, but not all, artworks.

5.4 The Scope of the Account: 'Art' and *Art*

With the basics of the account set forth and some potential objections addressed, I should clarify the intended scope of the account before going on to situate it in relation to other contemporary theories of art in the broadly analytic Anglo-American tradition. For one thing, it is *not* meant to stand as *the* single correct theory that exhaustively defines what art is: rather, it is meant to focus on one aspect of what art is that I contend is centrally important without precluding other aspects that may also be important. In other words, it is meant to be one true description amongst a possible plurality of true (partial) descriptions, each of which emphasizes some element that is important to understanding art without any one accounting for the entirety of what art is or can be.³⁶ Hence, it is potentially compatible with other theories of art, or rather, with certain elements of them. Although the account might be expressed in terms of a biconditional featuring the aspect of art that the account foregrounds—viz., expression, in the sense worked out above—since this is taken to be both necessary and sufficient for something to count as (a work of) art, it does not mean that art can be reduced to this aspect or properly understood in terms of it alone.

For another thing, the range of phenomena to which the account is meant to apply is not everything that might get called 'art', whether in ordinary language or in various technical or specialist discourses, e.g., the discourses that make up the institutions that, following Arthur Danto, have come to be called 'the artworld'.³⁷ While there is overlap between the object of the

³⁶ This is not to say that there is anything like a *total* view or a *complete* understanding of art that accounts for every aspect of its nature, only that it is sometimes useful to speak of this as a kind of limiting ideal. The openness of art that Weitz emphasized entails that such a 'totalizing' view is in principle impossible but it does not follow that some views or understandings of art are not broader and more inclusive than others, or that a broader view will not be a more correct one, on the whole and other things being equal.

³⁷ For the idea of an artworld and the institutional theory of art, see Danto 1964 and Dickie 1974. It should be noted that Danto does not subscribe to the institutional theory as a definition of art, at least not as Dickie formulates it; see Danto 1981, viii, 5, 31, 91-92.

account and the range of things that are commonly or institutionally referred to as ‘art’—e.g., works produced in media such as literature, painting, dance, music, film, etc., or items that are presented under the name of art by galleries and exhibitions, written about by critics, etc.—, not all these things will necessarily count as art on my account since some will not articulate the qualitative dimensions of an experience and disclose a particular way of experiencing (feeling, seeing, understanding, etc.) the world or some part of it. At the same time, other things which are overlooked by the ordinary and institutional uses of the term may count as art on this account since things other than works in officially recognized art forms can be expressions in the above sense. Thus, although the scope of my account is narrower than that of the institutional theory in one respect, in another respect it is broader.

The fact that the extension of my account differs from that of the institutional theory should not be taken to entail that it is revisionary or out of touch with concrete artistic practices or that I am referring to art in some parochial sense. Rather, I am acknowledging that ordinary language admits of multiple uses for the same words, with different uses having different senses that call for disambiguation, and I am not assuming that the extension of the institutional theory covers everything that we might be warranted to take as art in some relevant sense. In other words, my position is that not everything that gets referred to as ‘art’ is necessarily the proper object of concern of the philosophy of art and that, although paradigmatic instances of art are found in galleries, published by literary presses, performed in concert halls, etc., it is possible for artworld practitioners—including curators and programmers, critics, and artists themselves—to be mistaken in certain cases and to treat items as art that do not warrant such treatment.

This feature of the account is shared by Collingwood’s theory of art, which, as James McGuiggan (2016) notes, also does not count everything that an institutional theory would call ‘art’ as art in its sense. McGuiggan distinguishes the objects of these theories as ‘C-art’ and ‘D-art’, respectively, and argues that the two theories need not be seen to be in competition since they have different objects and are meant to answer different questions, with Danto being interested in what makes objects like Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes* and Duchamp’s ready-mades count

as artworks rather than mere artifacts and Collingwood being concerned with a certain dimension of human life and culture and its relation to other dimensions such as science, religion, history, etc. A similar distinction to McGuiggan's 'C-art' and 'D-art' can be made here between everything that is commonly and institutionally called 'art', which is largely equivalent to what he calls 'D-art', and every mediated expression of a qualitative experience, where this may be considered roughly equivalent to what he calls 'C-art' insofar as my account is consonant with Collingwood's account but not identical to it, going beyond it in ways informed by the ideas from de Beauvoir, Dewey, and Bergson discussed above.

While the terminology is far from ideal, when I need to distinguish between the two and when it is not already clear from the context, I will refer to the former as 'art' since it applies to what is called art in much of our extra-philosophical discourse, and the latter as *art* since it refers to those things of the former category that have something that sets them apart from its other members, and to things outside of this category that also have this 'something more'.³⁸ That the latter is not a narrowly parochial use of the term can be seen by noting that it is perfectly sensible to ask which pieces of music, novels, poems, dance performances, paintings, films, etc. are works of art and which are not: e.g., to ask which works of hip-hop music are art as distinct from mere entertainment or mere vehicles for delivering social messages, or which detective novels are also works of art, or which films in the horror genre reach the status of works of art and which merely give a good scare.³⁹ A parallel could be drawn here with Danto's distinction between artworks and mere things: just as he takes artworks to 'go beyond' or be 'more' than mere things in a way that he sees as being centrally relevant to the philosophy of art (see Danto 1981, Ch.1), I take certain works among those conventionally designated 'art' to go beyond

³⁸ This nomenclature is not meant to entail that works of *art* more fully realize the concept of art than do those works of 'art' that are not also *art*, although this is not a position that I would necessarily reject: see Collingwood 1933, 57ff, for his methodological principle of the 'Scale of Forms', which distinguishes between degrees of reality amongst different applications of a concept; for discussions of this principle in connection with the concept of art, see also Allen 2008 and McGuiggan 2016.

³⁹ Note that these questions need not simply be ways of asking which works of the genre in question are *good* works of that kind by some shared standard, e.g., a technical standard of artistic value or a hedonic standard of enjoyability. Rather, such questions are most charitably understood as asking which works meet a different kind of standard that not all works of that genre meet to any degree.

these, to have or be something ‘more’, where this might be shared by some things not conventionally considered ‘art’, and with these works of *art* being highly relevant to philosophical aesthetics.

This kind of question would *not* be a sensible one to ask on institutional theories of art or on Lopes’s buck-passing theory, since according to these theories all works in these genres will count as works of art to begin with simply due to their being works in conventionally accepted art forms. However, since this kind of question *is* a sensible one to ask, it follows that these other theories do not account for all of the ways the word art is meaningfully employed in our discourses and, moreover, that they do not address every question of philosophical interest concerning art, since this kind of question can motivate philosophical inquiry into what makes something art just as much as the kind of question about Warhol’s boxes and Duchamp’s readymades that motivated the inquiry that led Danto to develop his notion of the artworld which led in turn to Dickie’s institutional theory of art. Moreover, certain claims that are commonly made about the value of art make sense if read as claims about *art* but are less plausible if taken to be claims about ‘art’. (I discuss this further in Chapter 7, Section 7.4, below.)

Thus, not only is the object of my account—*art* over and above ‘art’—consistent with our pre-philosophical ways of speaking and thinking about art as opposed to focusing on an idiosyncratic or parochial sense of the term, but it also offers an answer to a question of philosophical interest that has been under-attended to in the last half-century or more due to the predominant focus on ‘art’ by philosophers within the analytic tradition. As such, although my account does not deliver *the* truth about what art is in opposition to existing theories of art, it fills a gap that has recently been overlooked and it is able to do so precisely by differing in its scope from theories of ‘art’. While I would argue that this already shows it to be an important addition to the current field of theories in aesthetics, there is more to be said about how my account relates to some of these theories, which is the focus of the next chapter.

6. SITUATING THE ACCOUNT IN RELATION TO CONTEMPORARY THEORIES OF ART

6.1 Introduction

In this section I show how my account compares favourably to current theories of art, sharing the plausible elements of some of these theories while avoiding problems they face or filling gaps they leave open. My aim in exploring how my account relates to and compares with these other theories of art is not to attempt to disprove these theories or to prove, definitively, that mine is superior, but rather to show the explanatory advantages of my account and its importance to current philosophical aesthetics. Comparison with other theories will also help to further explain and clarify this account and demonstrate its plausibility. Because these are my aims in this section, I will not fully explicate each of these theories here but will outline their fundamental positions and explain their strengths or problems insofar as these are useful for the comparison.

In the previous chapter I noted how my account compares to the institutional theory of art propounded by Dickie, so this will not be one of the theories I discuss in this section, although I will mention it when relevant for the comparison of my theory to one of those discussed below, given that I take many of these theories to implicitly assume some version of the institutional theory, if only to define the scope and object of their inquiries (viz., as ‘art’). Ultimately, the institutional theory of art explains the conventions and practices that are involved in our treating the things we call ‘art’ differently from things that we do not, but leaves open the question of whether or not these conventions and practices are grounded in the nature or being of the things in question, or whether they are, in a sense, arbitrary, and the related question of if and how such conventions and practices might be mistaken.

The theories to which I compare my account are: the aesthetic theory of art as advocated by Monroe Beardsley and, more recently, Nick Zangwill; the historical theory of art as developed by Jerrold Levinson; the definitions of artworks as action types and as performances offered by Gregory Currie and David Davies, respectively; and family resemblance and cluster accounts of art, the latter of which has been argued for by Berys Gaut. These do not exhaust the current field of theories of art but they do represent a significant part of the terrain, at least within analytic aesthetics, and they are the most useful to compare my account to in terms of the relevance of the respects in which they agree or differ. Since this is my aim, I will not enter into the debates surrounding these theories or analyze them in any depth, other than to the extent needed to make these comparisons. Before getting to these theories, however, it will help to revisit the desiderata for a theory of art proposed by Lopes to see how well my account meets these criteria.

6.2 Revisiting Lopes's Desiderata for a Theory of Art

Recall that Lopes counts being 'systematically informative' as the main desiderata for a theory of art, by which he means it should: (i) be able to explain what makes some activity or practice count as one of the arts (i.e., an art form); (ii) account for works that seem to belong to no particular art form (e.g., avant-garde works like *Inert Gas Series* or *All the things I know...*); and (iii) explain why some items produced in one of the arts are not themselves artworks (e.g., coffee mugs as non-art ceramic works). He contends that so-called buck-stopping theories cannot be systematically informative; I will argue, however, that the present account, which Lopes would consider a buck-stopping theory, can meet these desiderata.

As expressions, works of art require a medium in which they are worked out and embodied: it is the artist's engagement with his or her medium from which a work emerges, and it is the results of this engagement, as embodied in the medium, that the work's audience encounters. However, the range of potential media in which works of art can be made is not fixed in advance, since anything that can mediate the articulation of a felt quality and/or the way in which it is felt can be an artistic medium. Although a medium of some kind is essential, it is not necessary on

this account for a work to be produced in one of the kinds of activities or practices that Lopes counts as ‘the arts’ such as poetry, painting, music, dance, etc., nor is it necessary that the first artwork made in a particular medium be taken to pioneer a new art form. While such a work will reveal the potential of the medium to facilitate expression, it only makes sense to speak of it pioneering a new art form if this potential is taken up and used by other artists such that it leads to a new tradition of art-making with a history of development and a body of works that can be taken to comprise this art form.⁴⁰

On this theory, the activities and practices that make up ‘the arts’ are not definitive of the nature of art, with art forms being understood as historically developed ways of exploiting the potential of a given medium for mediating expression and articulating the qualitative dimensions of experience. For instance, dance is an art form because the controlled movements of the human body—i.e., its medium, roughly speaking—have been shown to be particularly effective for expressing certain qualities and our ways of feeling them, and the expressive potential of this medium has been developed through the expressions and explorations that comprise a history of artistic use of this medium. Thus, while it does not give ‘the arts’ the theoretical priority Lopes wants to assign them, my account can give a theory of the arts and so meets this desideratum. This also lets us answer whether certain practices or activities are art forms or whether the things made or done in them can be artworks, where such questions have been asked about things such as video games (Tavinor 2009), food (Telfer 2008), and perfume (Shiner 2015; Brozzo 2020). The answer is that these can be art forms provided it is possible not only to create qualitative experiences for consumers to undergo and enjoy, but to express the qualitative dimensions of experience through the characteristic elements of these activities.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Cf. S. Davies 2014, 330, who notes a similar worry about ‘free agents’ necessarily pioneering new art forms and argues that “[w]hether a work prefigures a new art kind surely depends on the direction of art’s later history”, so this cannot be a requirement for it to be art from the outset.

⁴¹ The expression must be done through what is characteristic of these activities for them to be art forms. A video game, for instance, that contains visually expressive graphics, expressive music on its soundtrack, or animated sequences that use editing in expressive ways may contain artworks without itself being *a work of video game art*; the latter would require that the game play and whatever other characteristics are central to its being a video game are integral to the expression.

The same elements of my account allow it to meet the second desideratum. Since it does not require all artworks to be instances of an art form, but only that they be mediated, it allows for genuine free agents or one-off artworks that are expressions in mediums that are not taken up again for their expressive potential. Moreover, it does not default to a classification of all free agents as works of conceptual art, although some of these works may count as such, especially if part of what is expressive about a work is the concept of using a particular medium as a vehicle for expression. The account will not tell us directly whether a particular hard case is a work of art—or at least not without additional historical knowledge of the artist and the process by which the work was made—but it does tell us what would have to be the case for it to count as such: thus, it is informative insofar as it lets us know what to look for.

For the same reason the account can explain why some items made in a medium that has come to be an art form—e.g., ceramics, poetry, music, film, etc.—are not artworks, so it meets the third desideratum. The answer is simply that those items are artworks in a given art form—e.g., works of literature, cinema, etc.—which use the resources of the medium(s) characteristically associated with that art form—e.g., language, recorded images and sounds (or deliberate silence) played in temporal sequence, etc.—to express a perspective on the qualitative dimensions of some experience. This feature of the account also enables it to ground empirical art studies and appreciative practices in the way Lopes thinks a theory should, since it guides our attention and gives us an idea not only of what to look for in the works we encounter but how best to approach and attend to them in order to apprehend them as art.

My account not only meets Lopes's desiderata in these ways but is preferable, as it does not face the problem of circularity that his attempt at buck-passing does and can give a better explanation for why not all things made in a medium associated with an artform are artworks, since it does not need to posit art forms as relatively fixed practices that normatively govern, and hence constrain, the creation and value of works within those forms. Moreover, it is more open since it can account for a wider range of potential art insofar as it is not committed to artworks needing to be internal to art forms, even if Lopes is open to adding new art forms.

6.3 Aesthetic Theories of Art

The view that artworks are things that are made or presented to be experienced and appreciated in some art-appropriate way has been common during the last half-century, including in Dickie's version of the institutional theory in which he argues that an artwork is any item that has had the status of 'candidate for appreciation' conferred on it by someone acting on behalf of the artworld (Dickie 1974, 34). The problem with many versions of this view is that they make arthood essentially arbitrary, with there being no property or principle on the basis of which this status is to be conferred. This is taken to its perhaps inevitable extreme by Timothy Binkley, who argues in "Piece: Contra Aesthetics" (1977) that artists, as members of the artworld, can confer this status on their own work, or indeed on anything they choose, by 'indexing' something as art. A narrower version of this view, which is more specific regarding what sort of appreciation is involved and what it is to intend that something be a candidate for it, defines artworks as things that are intended to give spectators an aesthetic experience. This position has been formalized by Monroe Beardsley (1981; 1982) and defended by Nick Zangwill (1995).

Beardsley defines an artwork as "an arrangement of conditions intended to be capable of affording an experience with marked aesthetic character—that is, an object (loosely speaking) in the fashioning of which the intention to enable it to satisfy the aesthetic interest played a significant causal part" (Beardsley 1981, xix), noting that he does not require this intention to be fulfilled in order for something to count as an artwork. That is, a lump of clay that was fashioned into a particular shape because the shaper thought this would look visually pleasing will count as a work of art for Beardsley even if its visible form fails to hold any aesthetic interest or to reward attention: that it was made with the intention that it does so is enough. (In other words, there can be bad art.) This theory can answer the coffee mug objection, since it holds that "objects belonging to a recognized category of artworks [e.g., ceramics] are not necessarily artworks" (*Ibid.*, xx), given that things in any category can be produced without being made to afford aesthetic experiences. However, a non-generic coffee mug that is designed to have visually

pleasing proportions, with an observer's eye being led smoothly from the curve of the handle to the circumference of the bowl which is wider in the middle and narrows at the brim, with its design making it stand out as an object of experience, i.e., one that has a distinct 'look' or 'style' to it, might count for Beardsley as a work of art.

Zangwill defends a similar definition, although one that appeals to an object's aesthetic properties rather than the experience of one who encounters the object. According to Zangwill, something counts as an artwork "if and only if someone had an insight that certain aesthetic properties would be determined by certain nonaesthetic properties; and because of this, the thing was intentionally endowed with the aesthetic properties in virtue of the nonaesthetic properties as envisaged in the insight" (Zangwill 1995, 307). For example, if a potter deliberately makes a mug by arranging her clay to have a certain shape and certain dimensions because she envisions these as being, say, balanced or delicate, the balanced or delicate mug that results will be a work of art. For the most part Zangwill follows Frank Sibley in his understanding of aesthetic and nonaesthetic properties, where Sibley takes nonaesthetic properties to be perceptual properties such as shape, size, colour, sound and texture that can be registered by anyone with functioning eyes, ears, etc. as well as semantic and representational properties, with aesthetic properties being partly descriptive and partly evaluative qualities such as gracefulness, daintiness, balance, harmony, garishness, brashness, etc. which require something like 'taste' over and above ordinary perception to apprehend.⁴² However, Zangwill differs from Sibley in holding that nonaesthetic properties can be sufficient conditions for the instantiation of the aesthetic properties that supervene on them (*Ibid.*; cf. Sibley 1959, 4-5).

As a theory of art this is at least *prima facie* plausible, since many artworks do seem to be made by artists who attend carefully to the qualities of the forms and arrangements they are producing in their workings with the materials of their medium, where the primary and secondary 'nonaesthetic' qualities are selected, retained, and modified for the sake of the tertiary

⁴² This maps onto Santayana's distinction between primary, secondary, and tertiary qualities (Santayana 1905, Ch. VI), with nonaesthetic properties being primary or secondary qualities and aesthetic properties being tertiary.

or ‘aesthetic’ qualities they realize in a particular arrangement or form. However, the scope of this theory is too broad, making it less explanatorily useful, since it fails to allow any distinction between *art* and *design*. While Beardsley is more restrictive, including only works of design that afford complex and intense aesthetic experiences rather than all works that deliberately realize an aesthetic property to any degree, his version of the theory still cannot account for the difference between an object with a beautiful and visually interesting design—e.g., a fancy artisanal coffee mug—and works of art in similar mediums, such as Henry Moore’s sculptures. Zangwill’s version is even broader since it would count anything that is made or arranged to look nice as an artwork, including rooms arranged by interior decorators, birthday cakes, etc. While he does not see this as a problem for his theory (Zangwill 1995, 316), it gives it less explanatory value since it leaves it unable to answer questions concerning what sets things we call ‘art’ apart from other artifacts, not to mention the question of what makes some of the things we call ‘art’ *art*.

In another respect, however, the theory is too restrictive since it would preclude things that unintentionally realize aesthetic properties or afford aesthetic experiences in virtue of how they were made and which are subsequently recognized as having this aesthetic character and presented as artworks. Moreover, the apparent conflation of the *artistic* with the *aesthetic* risks making these theories less able to account for purported artworks whose aesthetic properties are extraneous to what makes these works art, or where their aesthetic properties—understood broadly to include, e.g., the conceptual complexity and perplexingness of *All the things I know...*—do not seem to supervene or depend on any particular nonaesthetic properties. This running together of the artistic and the aesthetic also make the theory less able to answer questions concerning the value or the importance of art beyond their decorativeness or ability to give pleasure. Finally, Zangwill’s requirement that an artist *first* envision how manipulating a medium to produce nonaesthetic properties—e.g., a shape with certain proportions, or a certain colouring or texture—can produce aesthetic properties, and *then* deliberately produce the nonaesthetic properties in order to bring about the aesthetic ones, makes his view an instance of the technical theory that Collingwood argued against, leaving it unable to account for those

moments in an artist's creative process where their working with their medium is coextensive with their awareness of the aesthetic properties of what they are making.

Of course, much of the plausibility and explanatory value of Beardsley's narrower version of the theory depends on just what is meant by 'aesthetic experience'. If this is understood as experiencing something *as an artwork*—i.e., attending to and appreciating the features in virtue of which it counts as art—as distinct from attending to and evaluating it as, say, a tool, this would be compatible with my account, on which experiencing something *qua* art involves attending to and appreciating how it articulates or expresses the qualitative dimensions of some experience through the way in which the artist engaged with the medium in which it was made. The fact that a work is created to express this, and to be grasped as expressing it, would be a definitive characteristic of artworks. However, understanding 'aesthetic experience' to mean experiencing-as-art would make the theory circular and dependent on a further theory to explain what it is to experience something as art. And this was not Beardsley's own understanding of 'aesthetic experience', which he took to be a coherent, complete, and intense experience of the interrelation of the elements of a perceptible or imagined object or phenomenal field (Beardsley 1981, 527-529). Thus, the original account has less explanatory value than the account I am developing here, being less able to explain how certain avant-garde hard cases can count as art while being unable to preclude many ordinary artifacts from so counting.⁴³

6.4 The Historical Theory of Art

The theory of art put forward in Levinson's "Defining Art Historically" (2011a) and defended in "Refining Art Historically" (2011b)⁴⁴ is inspired by the institutional theory, agreeing that being

⁴³ A further difference between my account and those of Beardsley and Zangwill is that the latter both assume a subject-object distinction in their understanding of experience, with Zangwill locating the grounds of arthood in an object's properties and Beardsley most readily interpreted as locating them within the experience that a subject has of the object in question. Whether this is seen to be an advantage for one account over the other will largely depend on one's metaphysical commitments and sympathies.

⁴⁴ These articles originally appeared in 1979 in *British Journal of Aesthetics* and 1989 in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, respectively. For convenience I cite the reprints of both in Levinson's 2011 collection of essays titled *Music, Art, and Metaphysics*.

an artwork “is not an intrinsic exhibited property of a thing, but rather a matter of being related in the right way to human activity and thought” (Levinson 2011a, 4), though he understands the relation more broadly so as to allow for works made by individuals acting apart from any institutional context to be able to count as art. In place of the vague notion of ‘the artworld’, Levinson sees the history of art as what individual artworks must be related to and takes this to be a matter of artists intending that their work fit into this history. Specifically, he defines artworks as “object[s] that a person or persons, having the appropriate proprietary right over [the objects in question], nonpassingly intends for regard-as-a-work-of-art, i.e. regard in any way (or ways) in which prior artworks are or were correctly (or standardly) regarded” (*Ibid.*, 8-9).

The ‘proprietary right’ and ‘nonpassing’ conditions are meant to avoid instances of people misappropriating another’s work or property and making it ‘their art’ by merely intending that it be so, and cases of momentary, transient intentions or whims turning something into an artwork, respectively, but the key condition is the intention for the object to be regarded by (at least potential) spectators as art, with ‘regard’ being taken broadly to include “whatever is done in relation to an object so as to experience or interact with it” (*Ibid.*, 4). In his later paper, Levinson further clarifies the two ways of understanding this regard that feature in his discussion, which he calls the ‘intrinsic’ and ‘relational’ readings. On the intrinsic reading, intending something to be regarded as a work of art is a matter of intending that it be regarded, approached, etc. in one or more specifiable ways such as “with close attention to form, with emotional openness, with awareness of symbolism”, etc. (Levinson 2011b, 39), where these are ways in which previous artworks have been correctly regarded but where an awareness of this history need not be part of the artist’s intention. That is, all that is required is that someone intends what she has made to be regarded in some specifiable way, where this happens to be one of the ways in which artworks are correctly regarded as established by prior practice. On the relational reading, however, one need not intend a specific way of regarding the work other than that it be the way “some particular past artwork or artworks are or were correctly regarded” (*Ibid.*): e.g., having one or

more examples in mind and intending that one's own work be regarded in the ways these examples are correctly regarded as art, whatever these ways might be.

At first glance it might seem that, by tying what can count as art at a given time to what has counted as art before that time, Levinson's theory is too conservative or tied to the status quo to be compatible with the account I am developing here, which could be said to be forward- rather than backward-looking given the prominent place it gives to the creation of new ways of feeling, understanding, and otherwise experiencing. However, in many ways Levinson's historical focus fits well with the processual dimension of my account, with the two being compatible insofar as Levinson takes art to be a continually developing practice with nothing outside of this practice to appeal to in order to characterize it, as opposed to being something with a nature that is fixed in advance.⁴⁵ That this is part of Levinson's view is made clear in his explanation of how his definition can account for the evolution of art and the introduction of new ways of regarding artworks, which is that original artworks *both* will share some ways of being correctly regarded with earlier artworks, and so meet the condition necessary to count as art, *and* will introduce new ways of regarding art, thereby furthering the development, or *becoming*, of what art is (Levinson 2011a, 17-18). While Levinson does not cite Bergson or elaborate on the conceptions of time and change or evolution that he is working with, his account is perhaps most plausible when it is read according to the Bergsonian conceptions of the creation of new forms, occurring not *ex nihilo* but in continuity with what already exists as an outgrowth or further development of it, and of evolution as the progressive realization of 'virtual tendencies' or potential lines of development along which something can grow or *become*.

Despite the potential for compatibility on this point, there are notable differences between the historical theory and my account, but these differences need not be taken as *incompatibilities*

⁴⁵ See Levinson 2011a, 7: "the concept of art has no content [at a given time] beyond what art *has been*." While it is a minor point that does not ultimately count for much, one could note that this is compatible with de Beauvoir's existentialism according to which 'existence precedes essence' for at least some entities, e.g., human beings, which are an ambiguous tension between 'immanence' and 'transcendence'. The Bergsonian elements of my account justify taking artworks to be such entities, given that it positions artworks as being relevantly similar to living organisms in being 'vitaly organized', in his terms. A way of putting this in terms from analytic philosophy would be to note that this is entailed by art being an *open* concept, as Weitz argues.

since they are largely differences of perspective or in the questions motivating each position. For one thing, Levinson shares the tendency of many recent philosophers of art to approach his subject-matter from the perspective of a spectator, or at least of someone surveying works and what is done with them—e.g., how they are regarded—after they have been made,⁴⁶ despite his making the artist's intention as to how a work is to be regarded central to its status as art, whereas the account developed here approaches art from the perspective of an artist through the various stages of the creative process and takes finished artworks to be phases of this process. For another thing, Levinson is most plausibly read as giving a definition of what I have termed 'art', i.e., the various things that are commonly called by this term, whereas my account is of what I have termed *art* which overlaps with but is not equivalent to 'art': hence, Levinson's definition may correctly apply to 'art' but be unable to yield an answer to the question of what distinguishes some works of 'art' as *art*.

An interesting implication of Levinson's definition for my account is that if engaging with artworks with the aim of grasping them as expressions—i.e., apprehending what they disclose of qualitative experience and how they disclose this via the medium in which they are embodied—counts as one of the ways in which artworks have been correctly regarded-as-art (which it surely does), then every instance of *art* will also count as an instance of 'art', including works of *art* that fall outside currently familiar understandings of what 'art' is or of what can be an art form. It also follows that, on Levinson's theory, every work of *art* will add to the ways in which 'art' is correctly regarded, since every such work will be correctly regarded in a way that has been correct to regard at least some other works of 'art'—viz., by looking to grasp it as an embodied, mediated, disclosive expression—and since every such work will also introduce new ways in which it is correct to regard it. Each work will do this insofar as every expression is in part unique, being of a particular rather than a generic quality which is articulated in its particularity, and being embodied or articulated in its medium in a distinct way. Hence, each will require being attended to and understood in an equally distinct way in order for it to be apprehended as *art*.

⁴⁶ Levinson is explicit about this being his point of view; see Levinson 2011a, 19, fn.10.

This gives all *artworks* an inherent ‘art’-historical importance insofar as each work of *art* will expand, in some (perhaps small) way, what ‘art’ is and can be. This supports the characterization of *artworks*, as my account characterizes them, as being distinct from non-*art* works of ‘art’ insofar as they are similar to but have something ‘more’ than these latter works, in addition to whatever other distinct characteristics or values *art* may have. So, although Levinson’s definition cannot itself account for this distinction since this is not the question it is meant to answer, it can support the answer I give with the account I am developing.

One limitation of Levinson’s theory is his reluctance to say much about the substance of the ways of regarding-as-art that are claimed to be definitive of arthood in order to avoid giving anything approaching an “abstracted template of required characteristics” for being art (*Ibid.*, 7). However, without doing so it is difficult for him to account for how a certain way of regarding can be determined to be a *correct* way of regarding artworks, especially since he declares that these are not just ways of regarding that might happen to be commonplace (*Ibid.*, 9). He is aware of this worry, anticipating that readers may wonder whether his definition “*really tells* [us] what art is” (*Ibid.*, 14, original emphasis), and ends up listing some (non-exhaustive) considerations that he thinks will be relevant for determining correctness of regard.⁴⁷ However, without saying more about *why* these are correct ways of regarding art if it is not just because they are ways in which many paradigm artworks are commonly regarded, or saying more about how one can determine whether a particular type of regard is correct *for art*—especially with *new* ways of regarding-as-art that are introduced by original or ‘revolutionary’ works and so become part of the practice (*Ibid.*, 15-17)—, the explanatory value of his definition is limited. Nevertheless, since aiming to apprehend something as an expression by grasping what, and how, it expresses would seem to be *a* correct way of regarding art if anything is, it is safe to assume that at least the works that are *art* on my account will count on Levinson’s definition.

⁴⁷ These are: “(1) how the artist *intended* his work to be regarded; (2) what manner of regarding the work is *most* rewarding; (3) the kinds of regard *similar* objects have enjoyed; (4) what way of regarding the work is optimum for realizing the *ends* (e.g., certain pleasures, moods, awarenesses) which the artist envisaged in connection with appreciation; (5) what way of regarding the work makes for the most satisfying or coherent picture of its place in the *development* of art” (Levinson 2011a, 9-10, fn.5).

6.5 Family Resemblance and Cluster Accounts of Art

One way to avoid the problems that Levinson encounters in trying to define art without giving a shared characteristic or set of characteristics would be to give up the quest for a definition of art in terms of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions and turn to a family resemblance or a cluster account as the best we can do to make sense of the diversity of things and practices that have been called ‘art’, especially in the last hundred years. We have already seen the impetus for this turn away from definition in Weitz’s “The Role of Theory in Aesthetics”, which characterizes the concept of art as applying to such a variety of diverse things that it is implausible to think there is any defining characteristic they all share, but which maintains that there are similarities or resemblances that connect these things, allowing them to be brought under the same concept. Although Weitz’s anti-definitional argument is seen as less convincing now (see Gaut 2005, 274-275), for a time it influenced others⁴⁸ to work out family resemblance accounts of art in more detail than Weitz did, where he was concerned in his paper to point out that the concept of art is open and resists definition rather than to develop a theory of art using a family resemblance approach.

In general, family resemblance accounts hold that the concept of art is correctly applied or extended to individual works in virtue of their sharing certain similarities or resemblances with paradigm—or at least uncontroversial—cases of works that are art. For example, we might say that one family’s vacation photos are artworks due to their resembling the photographs of Henri Cartier-Bresson in their geometrically precise framing, their use of contrast and light, the way they capture contingent and fleeting moments in time, etc., while another family’s holiday snapshots are not art due to their lacking these kinds of resemblance to recognized works of photographic art. The main problem that this approach faces is that in order to be applicable and informative it needs to specify which similarities or resemblances are artistically relevant, given that everything is similar to or resembles everything else in some way. However, if a list of

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Khatchadourian (1971).

relevant similarities—or resemblances, criteria, etc.—for determining relevance is given, this would seem to become a disjunctive definition of art in terms of these resemblances or the factors that would make a resemblance artistically relevant, and so does not avoid giving a definition of art as the family resemblance theorist aims to do. Another problem is that the approach needs to start from the assumption that certain things are artworks in order to have paradigm cases for other potential cases of art to resemble, but a family resemblance approach alone cannot explain why these things are art in the first place. If the paradigm cases are chosen by appealing to what things are typically regarded as art, the approach risks either falling into a kind of institutional theory or being unable to settle disagreements over whether something—say, the Turner Prize winning *Shedboatshed* (Simon Starling, 2005)—is in fact an artwork, which is part of what an account of art is needed to do.

Perhaps these problems can be solved, or at least ‘dissolved’ in keeping with Wittgenstein’s approach, by admitting that on some attempts at explanation we ‘hit bedrock’ and at best can point to examples from our practices and say ‘this is what we do’ (to paraphrase Wittgenstein 1953, §217). Assuming for the moment that these problems can be answered and that a family resemblance account is viable, the thing to note is that this is an account of ‘art’ and not necessarily of *art*. The motivation for the turn to this kind of approach arises from a consideration of the great diversity of the things we call ‘art’ and the implausibility of all these things sharing a property or characteristic that grounds our referring to them in this way. However, even though it still admits of a wide variety of things, what I am calling *art* is a comparatively narrower concept than ‘art’ and so it is more plausible that there is some shared characteristic that sets *artworks* apart from non-*art* works of ‘art’. That is, it is not as implausible to think that Ozu’s *Tokyo Story* (1953), Eliot’s *Middlemarch* (1871-72), Coltrane’s *A Love Supreme* (1964), Bacon’s *Self-Portrait* (1972), and Balanchine’s *Diamonds* (1967) are set apart from other films, novels, musical works, paintings, and dance pieces, respectively, in virtue of a common feature (relativized to their respective mediums and historical contexts) than it is to think that all of these things share a common feature both with each other and with all other

works of ‘art’ in each of these mediums.⁴⁹ Moreover, positing such a common feature need not be incompatible with Weitz’s insistence that art is an open concept. Although my account of artworks as embodied expressions sets limits in advance on what can count as *art*, the content of the account remains open insofar as the form that an embodied expression can take is not fixed in advance given the inherent particularity of *what* a work of this kind will express and *how* it expresses it in its medium, and of what can serve as a medium for such expressions.

If one assumes that the problems faced by a family resemblance account are intractable but is convinced by the motivation for such an approach, one response would be to give a cluster account of art. Berys Gaut makes such a move in “‘Art’ as a Cluster Concept” (2000) and “The Cluster Account of Art Defended” (2005),⁵⁰ arguing that we should take the great diversity of things that seem to fall within the extension of the concept of art to entail that art cannot be defined in terms of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions, but that it does not follow that we cannot give *any* criteria for applying the concept. Gaut presents a view on which “there are multiple criteria for the application of the concept, none of which is a necessary condition for something’s being art”, where meeting one or more of these criteria “*counts towards*” but does not necessarily entail something’s being art (Gaut 2005, 273-274, original emphasis). In contrast to Weitz, Gaut holds that necessity and sufficiency can still be found in cluster accounts but that, in contrast to the standard approach to definition, they are to be found at the edges rather than the core of the cluster. Specifically, he argues that whatever the conditions or however many of them there are in the cluster, meeting *all* these conditions is sufficient for something to count as art, while meeting *at least one* condition is necessary for it to so count: i.e., the conditions are disjunctively rather than individually necessary (*Ibid.*, 274).

⁴⁹ We might also think that Maurice Mandelbaum’s suggestion, *contra* Weitz, that *relational* properties can give us a necessary condition that all artworks share even if *intrinsic* properties cannot—e.g., that we can look for a common property that makes things art in the *activities* of these things’ makers—is more plausible for *art* than it is for ‘art’; see Mandelbaum 1965, 5.

⁵⁰ Note that Gaut takes cluster accounts to be a type of family resemblance account with ‘resemblance-to-paradigm’ accounts being another (Gaut 2005, 275). It is more straightforward for me to treat them here as two different types of account, but nothing relevant for my purposes hangs on this difference.

Gaut defends a cluster of ten characteristics as being relevant, disjunctively necessary, and collectively sufficient for something to count as art, although in principle this approach is open to different accounts based on different clusters.⁵¹ Gaut's criteria for arthood include "possessing positive aesthetic qualities;" "belonging to an established artistic form;" and "being the product of an intention to make a work of art" (*Ibid.*), and so his account will cover those things deemed to be art by the theories and definitions discussed above, including Lopes's buck-passing theory, but go beyond these other accounts to be more inclusive. Like Levinson's historical definition and the family resemblance approach, Gaut's cluster is best understood as an account of 'art' rather than *art*, although, as with Levinson's definition, *artworks* on my account will likely⁵² count as 'art' on Gaut's, since his cluster includes "being expressive of emotion;" "exhibiting an individual point of view;" and "being an exercise of creative imagination" as criteria (*Ibid.*). Additionally, as with the family resemblance approach, it is more plausible that some sub-set of conditions that are relevant for something being 'art' will be jointly sufficient for something being *art*, or that there might be individually necessary (but not yet sufficient) conditions for *arthood*, and so it is not clear that a cluster account is best suited to defining *art* even if we agree with Gaut that it is the best way we have of accounting for 'art'.

Since most currently prominent theories of art, at least in analytically-oriented aesthetics, are theories of 'art' like the ones I have discussed above, and since my account is of the distinct, but overlapping, concept of *art*, there is no direct competition since these accounts and mine ultimately aim to answer different questions. However, there is still a possibility of one of these theories being incompatible with my account, or compatible to a greater or lesser degree, since a theory of 'art' will need to understand 'art' as something with which *art*, as I characterize it here, can overlap—and historically has overlapped—to a significant extent. Of the theories surveyed so far I am inclined to take Levinson's historical definition, understood as an account of how we classify and conceive of things as works of 'art' in our current practices of making, curating,

⁵¹ For another cluster account of art distinct from Gaut's, see Dutton 2008, esp. 458-60.

⁵² But not necessarily, since Gaut would not say that any three of his ten criteria are jointly sufficient, and depending on how 'expressiveness' and 'emotion' is understood.

appreciating, etc.,⁵³ and a cluster account like Gaut's, understood as explaining what the works that we count as 'art' *are*, i.e., what sorts of characteristics they have rather than how we classify or handle them, to be the most plausible accounts of these two aspects of 'art'. Moreover, they are broadly compatible with my account of *art* since the definitive characteristics of *artworks*, understood as embodied disclosive expressions of qualitative experience, will also be characteristics—or likely characteristics—of 'art' on these accounts, since engaging with something to apprehend it as an expression is plausibly among the standard ways of regarding-as-art, and expressiveness of emotions (understood to include affects and other felt qualities) and points of view (understood to include ways of experiencing things), and being an exercise of creative imagination, will be parts of any plausible cluster of conditions for arthood.

While these are the important respects in which the account I am developing here is compatible with these existing definitions of art, there are two other theories in contemporary philosophy of art that remain to be discussed: Gregory Currie's account of artworks as action types, as outlined in *An Ontology of Art* (1989), and David Davies's performance theory of art as presented in *Art as Performance* (2004). It is especially important to relate these accounts to the one developed here since all three agree in taking artworks to be process.

6.6 Action Type and Performance Theories of Art

Unlike the definitions discussed so far, which aim to state when something counts as an artwork, Currie and Davies are primarily concerned to answer a different but related question: What *kind* of thing are artworks, ontologically? While Currie makes it clear that he is not concerned to define 'artwork' (Currie 1989, 1), Davies is interested in the definitional project and turns to this after first developing his ontological position (Davies 2004, p. 236ff). Both agree that artworks are better understood as processes rather than merely as products of processes and that the proper

⁵³ For the sake of simplicity, 'we' and 'our' here can be read as referring to practices within broadly western or European artistic traditions, although one of the virtues of Levinson's historical definition is the ease with which it can be applied to various cultural traditions with differing histories of art and so can generate a cross-cultural account on which ways of regarding things as works of art from any tradition can come to count as correct ways in which artworks can be regarded in all traditions.

target of our appreciation of an artwork is the artist's accomplishment and not, say, an object appreciated for its manifest properties. However, apart from these similarities Currie's and Davies's theories differ importantly in most respects.

6.6.1 Currie on Artworks as Action-Types

Currie's view is that artworks are action types that consist in the discovering of a structure by means of a heuristic path, with an action of this type being performed by an artist at a particular time that we would ordinarily call the moment of the work's creation; however, Currie does not take works to be created but rather "enacted" (Currie 1989, 70, 75). By a 'structure', Currie means something like the pattern or arrangement of a work's formal elements: in the case of a musical work, a certain sequence of sounds being interrelated in a set of distinct ways such as being played at a certain tempo; for a work of literature, a particular sequence of words; for a painting, a certain visual pattern formed by the arrangement of colours and lines on a surface; etc. By 'heuristic path' he means a specifiable way in which the artist arrives at or discovers this structure: e.g., her motivation or inspiration, the biographical and art historical contexts in which she worked and the influences these had on her creative process, the artistic problems she faced and how she went about solving them, etc. (*Ibid.*, 68-69). For example, Cézanne's *Still Life with Apples and Pears* (1892), on Currie's account, would not be the physical canvas or the visual pattern formed by colours and textures of the paint, but would be the discovering of this visual pattern (*y*) by Cézanne via a particular process (*z*), where 'z' might include working in a particular context, having a certain inspiration or motivation, making a certain series of creative choices, applying paint to a canvas in a certain way, etc., and where the action type '*discovering y by means of z*' is first enacted by Cézanne on a particular occasion, viz., when he first went through this process and made the first instance of the work.

Currie thinks that artists discover rather than create these structures, presumably because he takes them to be abstract entities and, as such, to be eternal. The structure is only one of an artwork's constitutive elements, so structures being discovered does not entail that artworks

themselves are discovered. He also holds that the target of our appreciation and evaluation is neither the structure nor the object that bears it but the way in which the artist discovered the structure. For instance, appreciating Cézanne's *Still Life* would be a matter of understanding and evaluating what Cézanne accomplished in discovering just that visual structure in the way he did, within the contexts of his career as a painter, the history and state of painting at the time, the artistic problems he had to overcome, etc. The structure and the heuristic path are each partly constitutive of the work: if we were to learn that Cézanne's heuristic path had been different than we had thought it to be, this would change our understanding of what the work itself is, as well as our appreciation and, likely, our evaluation of it. For Currie, this explains why we might classify two bearers of the same structure—e.g., two perceptually indistinguishable objects—as distinct artworks and why we might evaluate them differently, e.g., taking one to be original and the other derivative due to differences in the heuristic paths of their respective artists.⁵⁴

As a process-oriented account, mine might seem to be compatible with Currie's, especially since expressing is something people do and so is an action, and since I agree that the target of the *artistic* understanding, appreciation, and evaluation of artworks is what the artist did in making them. However, my account does not take artworks to be action- or process-*types* but particular processes. Currie's view of artworks is not fully processual even though it appeals to actions, since action-*types* are separable from any one's actual performance of an action, where a fully process-oriented account will focus on the event of someone's performing the action and not on the action as distinct from its performances, since the latter is a way of treating actions as if they were objects. Moreover, an ontology of 'types' and 'tokens' is at odds with the radical empiricism of the thinkers on whom I draw such as Bergson and Dewey,⁵⁵ which serves as the framework for my account. An ontology of particulars and their relations, in which generalizations ('types' or 'kinds') are understood to be conceptual constructions that come from

⁵⁴ This could happen in cases in which one artist copies the structure of an earlier work with which she was familiar and another artist happens to arrive at the same structure without any knowledge or experience of the earlier work.

⁵⁵ And perhaps Collingwood, given the unpublished *Libellus de Generatione*, from which it is clear not only that he is a process-oriented thinker but that he is at least open to something like the radical empiricism found in James and Bergson, traces of which are also found in Dewey, most likely via the influence of James.

our registering similarities between particulars, fits these thinkers—and, by extension, my account—better. While it is useful and perhaps indispensable for many purposes to speak in terms of general kinds or types, I am hesitant to reify these as (abstract) entities alongside (concrete) particulars and relations: I would prefer to explain certain features of artistic practice, such as the treatment of multiple copies of novels or films and multiple performances of musical or theatrical works as instances of the *same* works, without appealing to ‘types’.⁵⁶

The other main difference between my account and Currie’s is that where he takes artworks to be neither created nor discovered, holding works to be enacted discoveries of structures, I take artworks to be *both* created and discovered as explained in the previous chapter. In regards to the two elements that Currie takes to be jointly constitutive of artworks, there might be room for compatibility between our accounts depending on how each is understood. If a ‘structure’ is understood to be just a sequence or pattern of perceptual properties—e.g., sequences of sounds or words, or patterns of lines, shapes, and colours—I would argue that not all works necessarily have such a structure, including many works of conceptual art. But if it is understood to be an ordering or organization of qualitative elements more broadly—e.g., the qualitative *Gestalt* of the work as a whole, unified by what Dewey called a pervasive quality—there is more room for my account to take this as a partly constitutive element of at least most artworks, although there still may be some works without structures in this sense, such as Barry’s *All the things I know...*⁵⁷

Regarding what Currie calls heuristic paths, while my account takes an artist’s process of interaction with her medium to be partly constitutive of her work insofar as this work, *qua* embodied expression, emerges from this process as a further phase of it, I do not take every element of this process that might have played a role in constituting the work to be necessary to

⁵⁶ My preference for an ontology of particulars is of course beyond the scope of my project to argue for, but I note it here because it is a difference between Currie’s account and my own.

⁵⁷ While this work does have an overall quality, the apprehension of which is important for appreciating the work (which I would say is something like ‘a sense of what Kant would call the sublime, arising from the attempt to grasp the referent of the work’s title when we realize that it is beyond the limits of our imagination to do so, mingled with the realization of Barry’s cleverness in paradoxically presenting something we can refer to but not imagine or contemplate as an artwork in the context of the late modern artworld), it is not clear that this is a quality that pervades and unites qualitative ‘parts’ of the work.

know in order to apprehend the work. Moreover, as Currie understands them, heuristic paths are broader than just the artist's interactions with her medium and so include some factors as partly constitutive of works that I would not. For instance, I would count the art historical context in which the artist worked as relevant for understanding and appreciating works of 'art', and possibly for works of *art*, but not as *necessarily* constitutive of either.

Like Currie, Davies takes artworks to be "process-like rather than product-like entities" (Davies 2004, 128) but does not take works to be types, arguing that Currie is wrong to infer from the claim that, in appreciating a work, we appreciate what the artist did the further claim that the work, being the target of this appreciation, is an action type rather than a particular 'token' action that we can appreciate *as* an instance of a more general type (*Ibid.*, 131-132). This lets Davies differ from Currie on whether artworks are created, since if artworks are particular process-like entities an artist can be taken to create a work when she performs that particular process, just as enacting a specific instance of a type of action brings that specific instance into being. Davies also raises problems for the way that Currie takes structure-types and heuristic paths to be constitutive elements of artworks.

Regarding structure-types, the problem has to do with the difficulty of identifying a single, determinate structure possessed by works in many art forms, such as the various visual arts, even if this can be done for works of literature and music. The worry is that taking structure-types to be partly constitutive of works would make it ambiguous as to *which* work any particular instance—e.g., a painted canvas—is an instance of, given that different structures or patterns can be found in the instance depending on which of its features we take to count and how we take these to be related (*Ibid.*, 135-136). Regarding heuristic paths, the worry is that it is unclear whether this refers to a rational reconstruction by a critic or interpreter of the history of the artist's creative process and its influences (as is suggested in Currie 1989, 68-69) or to the actual historical process the artist went through. If it is the former, this raises the problem of having single instances or 'tokens' instantiating multiple artworks, with one work resulting from each variation in how the heuristic path is interpreted or reconstructed. If it is the latter, Currie needs

to clarify which features of the context of production, and which actions on the part of the artist, will count as part of this heuristic path and hence part of the artwork itself so that we can distinguish it from inadequate or incomplete reconstructions (Davies 2004, 133-134). While Davies does not put the point quite this way, I would add that the main problem raised by this ‘heuristic realism’ is that it would make artworks epistemically inaccessible given that even the artist herself will likely not know all the relevant factors in her heuristic path and so, on Currie’s account, will not know what her own work is.

6.6.2 Davies on Artworks as Performances

As an alternative process-oriented account to Currie’s, Davies gives a theory of artworks as performances that addresses both the ontological and definitional questions. The ontological part of the theory holds that “artworks are token performances whereby a content is articulated through a vehicle on the basis of shared understandings” (*Ibid.*, 236), where such a performance “specifies a focus of appreciation” (*Ibid.*, 146).

Taking works to be ‘token’ performances, rather than performance-types, avoids some metaphysical questions for which there seems to be no good answer, such as whether works exist independently of their tokens. Davies argues that this is the best way to make sense of “the work-relativity of our modal judgments about artworks” (*Ibid.*, 116), i.e., our judgments about which of a work’s properties are not just constitutive of but essential to it as the work it is, and thus when certain counterfactual instances will count as the same work. Moreover, taking them as articulated on the basis of ‘shared understandings’ lets us explain how a vehicle—e.g., bodily movements, printed words, an amount of clay, etc.—can articulate a certain content in virtue of how this vehicle was manipulated by the artist: e.g., how a certain sequence of movements, a certain arrangement of words on the page, or a shape into which the clay is moulded, can be meaningful for an audience and the artist alike. Such a set of shared understandings is what is otherwise referred to by Davies as an ‘artistic medium’, which is understood not as the materials with which the artist works—e.g., oils or watercolours—but rather as a set of conventions for

how such materials can be used as vehicles to articulate a content, with, e.g., the mediums of modern dance, or lyric poetry, or classical sculpture being ways of moving, or arranging words, or shaping matter ‘meaningfully’.

While this specifies the ontological kind that artworks belong to, it cannot be used to identify artworks or distinguish them from non-artworks since it only offers a necessary condition for arthood which can be met by other things that are plausibly not artworks, such as “the writing of a student term-paper” or “the giving of a Christmas present” (*Ibid.*, 236). The definitional part of Davies’s theory addresses this by clarifying what it is for a medium to be an *artistic* medium and defining an artwork as “a performance which articulates a content through a vehicle via an ‘artistic medium’” (*Ibid.*, 253). To distinguish an artistic medium from other systems of shared understandings—for instance, conventions governing Christmas gift-giving—Davies adapts Nelson Goodman’s account of the conditions for a practice of making counting as one of *artistic* making to give us conditions by which a system of shared understandings counts as an *artistic* medium.

This draws on what Goodman calls “symptoms of the aesthetic”,⁵⁸ which include such features as syntactic and semantic density, relative repleteness, exemplification, and the capacity for multiple, complex reference (see Goodman 1976, 252-255, 65-66).⁵⁹ An artistic medium, then, can be understood as a system of conventions for articulating various contents—for instance, expressing feelings—via vehicles that function as ‘aesthetic symbols’ in Goodman’s sense, i.e., that exhibit one or more symbols of the aesthetic. Davies’s definition of an artwork follows from this, viz.: “an artwork is a performance which articulates a content through a vehicle via an ‘artistic medium,’ [i.e.,] a system of articulatory understandings in a system of the

⁵⁸ By a symptom, Goodman means a property that “is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for, but merely tends in conjunction with other such symptoms to be present in, aesthetic experience” (Goodman 1976, 252).

⁵⁹ A medium is *syntactically dense* if any degree of difference in its materials or vehicles will make a difference to the meaning or content articulated, *semantically dense* if it contains conventions that enable the articulation of fine distinctions in meaning, and *replete* if every aspect or property of a vehicle in that medium can count as meaningful with respect to the content it articulates. A medium *exemplifies* if it possesses the properties that it symbolizes, i.e., if it is itself an example of the content that it articulates, and it allows for *multiple and complex reference* if a vehicle in that medium, or some part of it, can articulate multiple meanings or can articulate a meaning through its relations with the other parts of the vehicle.

artworld”, at least in Danto’s sense of this notion rather than Dickie’s,⁶⁰ where the conventions of this system “facilitate the articulation of content through vehicles that perform symbolic functions that are ‘aesthetic’ in Goodman’s sense” (Davies 2004, 253).

As another process-oriented theory, there are several points of compatibility between Davies’s account and mine. For one thing, conceiving of artworks as not just actions but performances is consistent with taking them to be expressions, with ‘expression’ being understood to refer to the artist’s act of expressing and not only to the result of that act. For another, my account understands expressing as a matter of articulating a content, with a qualitative dimension of experience along with the way in which it is experienced—i.e., the way of feeling, seeing, etc. it involves—together making up the content. Although I talk of expression taking place in a medium while Davies talks of content being articulated through a vehicle, this is merely a terminological difference: in my references to the medium in and through which an artist works, and to the work as an expression that is embodied in that medium, ‘medium’ can be understood to mean more or less what Davies calls the ‘vehicular medium’: e.g., for poetry, language and its affordances, along with the words selected and arranged in which the poem can be said to be ‘embodied’; for sculpture, the particular material in which a work is embodied, such as clay or marble or bronze, along with the process of shaping and casting or firing it; etc. Davies’s use of the term ‘artistic medium’ roughly corresponds to what I have been referring to as ‘art forms’, e.g., poetry or sculpture in general, or more specific genres within these forms such as sonnet form or mobile sculpture. However, my account individuates art forms—though not genres—according to the medium or mediums (i.e., the types of vehicle, in Davies’s terms) characteristically connected to these art forms and the affordances these allow for expression, whereas Davies individuates artistic media according to sets of conventions or shared understandings held by “artistic communities” for how certain types of vehicle can articulate content meaningfully (*Ibid.*, 245).

⁶⁰ For Danto, an artworld is a set of theories of art arising from a history of practice on which artists and spectators draw to envisage, create, understand, critique, etc. artworks, as distinct from Dickie’s notion of an institution that works to confer status on certain objects through the judgments of people acting on its behalf.

This point about Davies's appeal to shared understandings leads to one of the areas where the account I am developing differs from his. There are undeniably some conventions for structuring or organizing vehicles in certain mediums, on the basis of which informed observers of works in those mediums can detect the articulation of content—i.e., can 'read' elements of vehicles as meaningful.⁶¹ However, whereas Davies's definition takes a background of such conventions to be necessary for and even constitutive of artworks, insisting that this makes artworks and their making "essentially institutional" (*Ibid.*, 246), my account does not.

At least, it does not if these understandings are held to be shared in advance of the audience's encounter with the work, which seems to be the case on Davies's account,⁶² since this would significantly limit the kind of cognitive value that artworks could have: one has less to learn from a work if one already knows *the ways in which* it expresses its content, even if *what* it expresses is something not yet known. On the other hand, if the understandings in question are taken to be shared *by the work* in the audience's encounter with it, with the work in effect teaching its audience to understand it as they encounter it, I could accept this as a necessary and even constitutive part of something being an artwork on my account. A work that does not make clear what it expresses cannot be said to be a successful expression, and if what it expresses is at least partly unique, arising from a particular qualitative experience within a particular situation, it will need to be understood in new ways that go beyond any received understandings its audience already has and brings with it to the encounter. Just as, on my account, the artist herself does not

⁶¹ An example is the convention of the sonnet form that there will be a 'turn' in both the rhyme scheme and the subject-matter or sense of what is being conveyed, at either the ninth or the thirteenth line to start the sestet or the couplet, respectively, depending on whether the sonnet is in Petrarchan or Shakespearean form. See Adams 2003 for a good discussion of the conventions of poetry and their expressive or meaning-conveying potential.

⁶² Or at least in Davies 2004; see, e.g., 245-246, where he writes that an "artistic medium ... is embodied in the understandings of an artistic community, understandings that provide a necessary link between artists and receivers of works", and that "a focus of appreciation of an artwork can be specified only by one who ... orients herself to a community of receivers." This suggests that the community of receivers have these understandings even before the work is made. I should note that Davies's recent work on the neo-Goodmanian theory of art revises this view in order to account for how these shared understandings can emerge from the interaction between artists and the intended audiences for their work, which is a further point of similarity with the view I am developing here, as well as with Collingwood's remarks on the relation between the artist and her community. In order to avoid adding unduly to the length of this dissertation I will leave this compatibility to be explored in future work.

know in advance exactly what an *artwork* will be—i.e., what, or how, it will express—, the audience for a work of *art* will also not know this in advance of their encounter with it.

The take-away from this point is that whereas on Davies's account art is essentially institutional—albeit in a different way than Danto's and Dickie's accounts are, and insofar as we take anything that works through shared understandings to be broadly 'institutional'—, my account insists that art can never be entirely conventional and so cannot be fully accounted for even by a broadly 'institutional' approach in Davies's sense. While these positions are not necessarily incompatible, since one can hold that art must be partly conventional without being entirely so, there is at least an apparent tension in the two accounts. What this suggests is that, as with the other theories and definitions discussed above, Davies's account is primarily one of 'art', i.e., of those things that are customarily referred to by this term in our everyday discourse, whereas the account developed here is concerned with *art* as a special sub-class of 'art' that also includes some things that are not typically classified as 'art', e.g., self-consciously embodied expressions of qualitative experience in vehicular media that fall outside conventional art forms and which are not governed by the shared understandings of an 'art'-istic community.⁶³

Unlike some of the other definitions considered above, where I noted that there was no incompatibility between these accounts and my own since they are answers to different questions, there is one possible area of incompatibility between my account of *art* and Davies's account that remains to be addressed. Recall that, on my account, many works of *art* will also be works of 'art'. If *artworks* are not essentially or constitutively institutional, and some are also works of 'art', it would seem that not every work of 'art' is *essentially* institutional, i.e., partly *constituted* by operating according to shared understandings. This implication can be avoided, however, if we take those works of *art* that also count as works of 'art' to be partly developed in terms of existing conventions for works of their kind—i.e., in the same medium or art form—or to start out as unconventional but to come to be accepted as 'art' through the expansion of the

⁶³ As with the previous footnote, I should note that this claim is made of the view found in Davies 2004 and that it does not necessarily hold of Davies's current views, which are more plausibly read as an account of *art* rather than 'art', although one in which *art* is cashed out on neo-Goodmanian rather than expressionist terms.

conventions and shared understandings governing the latter. Incidentally, this gives us a plausible explanation of first works or *Ur-art*, for which Levinson's historical definition has trouble accounting: such works were *art* before they came to be 'art', with the concept of 'art' arising from works of *art* but then being extended to include more things than just expressions, perhaps on the basis of a family resemblance. If this is right, *art* will be not only distinguishable from, but historically and conceptually prior to, 'art'.

Whether or not this is an incompatibility between the two accounts, Davies's ontological claim that works of art are performances will hold equally for 'art' and *art*, given that works of both are essentially articulations.⁶⁴ This entails that works of both are the same kind of thing, ontologically speaking, but differ with respect to how works of each kind are governed by or transcend shared conventions for expressing or making meaning. While I largely agree with Davies about the ontological kind to which works of art (in both senses) belong, there is still a gap left by his and other ontological theories, and by the definitions of art that are currently most prominent, which my account fills. This is because these other theories are not equipped to address the question of what sets some of the things that are conventionally called 'art' apart from others as what I call works of *art*. My account lets us distinguish actions or performances that are *artistic* from those that are not by taking *artworks* not just to be processes or performances, but processes or performances of *expression*. Just as Currie understands inquiring into the ontological status of artworks and defining art as "two distinct but complementary projects" (Currie 1989, 2), mine can be considered a third project—i.e., inquiring into and defining *art*—distinct from but complementary to these others.

There is another reason why it is important to give an account of *art*: it gives us a basis for a theory of artistic value. Now that the basics of my synthesized account of what art is have been laid out and have been situated in relation to other contemporary accounts, we can consider what view of artistic value follows from this understanding of what artworks are, along with the kinds of values that engaging with art as either a creator or an audience-member can realize.

⁶⁴ Cf. Davies 2008, where he argues that Collingwood's expression-based account of art is a performance theory.

7. IMPLICATIONS OF THE SYNTHESIZED ACCOUNT: VALUE AND PRACTICE

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I outline the theories of artistic value, or what makes an artwork good/better or bad/worse as a work of art, and of the value of art, i.e., of the ways in which making or engaging with art can be valuable or important for human life and culture, that follow from the ontological part of the account, i.e., the theory of the nature of art and of what artworks are, as outlined above. As with the discussion of the ontological part of the account in the preceding two chapters, there is only enough space here to outline the basics of the axiological part as a precursor to further research, with several questions, topics, and courses of inquiry being left for future work to address.

One virtue of the synthesized account I am developing is that it provides a unified theory of both the nature and value of art, with what artworks are being central to what makes an artwork good *qua* art—i.e., its artistic value—and to the ways that artworks can be valuable or important as part of human life and culture—i.e., the value(s) *of* art. In contrast, many of the standard definitions of ‘art’ have little to offer on this question apart from aesthetic definitions, although the problems with these have been discussed above. It is not clear, for instance, what it would mean for a work to be better than another at being granted arthood by a representative of the artworld, or for it to be better at being regarded-as-art in a way in which earlier artworks were correctly regarded. Since a cluster account will have multiple conditions, it might be thought that meeting more of these conditions will make a work better and that meeting fewer conditions would make it worse, but it is not clear why this would have any effect on a work’s value *qua*

art. Additionally, many current discussions of the ways in which art can be valuable are either not grounded in a theory of what artworks are or presuppose a broadly institutional understanding of ‘art’, where it is not clear why these values would be tied to their status as ‘art’ institutionally defined.

All else being equal, a theory of art’s value that explains how this value is related to what art is will be more complete, and so seems preferable to one that treats value and ontology separately; moreover, a theory for which this relation is intrinsic will be preferable to one for which it is extrinsic or less tightly connected. Likewise, a theory of the value of art—e.g., its cognitive, moral, or social value—that ties this to its artistic value will be more complete and so, I contend, preferable to one that takes these axiological dimensions of art to be separate. One reason to prefer a unified account is that it leads to the plausible conclusion that the cognitive, moral, or social value of an artwork is linked to its artistic value such that artistically good artworks will be more valuable in these respects than works that are worse *qua* art.

7.2 Artistic Value and the Evaluation of Artworks

Things that are artworks can be valuable in a number of ways, not all of which will be relevant to their goodness or badness as art. A work’s economic or educational value, for example, is not necessarily connected to its goodness or badness as an artwork: works that are artistically bad can be valuable as teaching tools that illustrate what not to do, and works that are artistically good need not command the highest prices. Since my concern here is with what it means for an artwork to be good or bad *qua* art, which I call artistic value, it is worth distinguishing this from two ways in which artworks can also be valuable that often get conflated with artistic value: viz., aesthetic value and technical or craft value.

‘Aesthetic value’ is often used as a catch-all phrase to encompass both what makes art good and what makes sensory or felt experiences good, with the latter sense including properties such as beauty or harmony which can be predicated of non-artworks as well as works of art, for

instance, in talk of the aesthetic value of nature⁶⁵ or in the literature on ‘everyday aesthetics’.⁶⁶ This running-together of what are plausibly two distinct types or sources of value is likely due to the term ‘aesthetics’ being used in philosophy as a professional designation covering both the philosophy of art and the philosophy of beauty—or, perhaps, the philosophy of the axiological dimension of experience *qua* experience—where this dates back at least to Kant’s third critique, which discusses the beauty of perceptual forms together with topics related to art-making such as the notion of artistic genius (see Kant 1793).

I argue that this conflates two distinct, though not entirely unrelated, topics of philosophical concern and that it would be clearer to disambiguate the philosophy of art from aesthetics, and within the realm of value, artistic value from aesthetic value. However, some, including Dominic Lopes (2011), have argued against the notion that there is something called ‘artistic value’ that is distinct from what is already included in aesthetic value. As Louise Hanson (2013) notes in her response to Lopes, his argument rests on his defining ‘aesthetic value’ so as to include features such as “being expressive of emotion, being intellectually challenging, having complex meanings, being formally complex and coherent, being original, and being the product of a high degree of skill” (Lopes 2011, 525). However, as Hanson points out, Lopes does not explain “what ties all these together as *aesthetic* values” (Hanson 2013, 507), and so his argument that anything we might call ‘artistic values’ are included in aesthetic value in effect begs the question by stipulating this inclusion in his definition of the latter.

It is notable that apart from formal complexity and coherence, the qualities that Lopes stipulates to be included in ‘aesthetic value’ are specific to artworks and not to other things in the realm of the aesthetic, e.g., natural objects or scenes. This gives us one reason to disambiguate artistic value from aesthetic value, with the former being used to refer to whatever qualities make something good *qua* art and the latter referring to whatever qualities might be involved in something looking, sounding, smelling, tasting, or otherwise ‘feeling’ good, where this is in

⁶⁵ See, e.g., Thompson 1995, Carlson 2000, and Budd 2002 for some of the work on this topic, and Parsons 2008 for an overview of much of the rest.

⁶⁶ For one of the foundational papers on this topic, see Irvin 2008a.

keeping with the term's etymology—coming from the Greek *aisthesis*, referring to sense perception—and with traditional uses that pertain to appearances and beauty. Another reason to treat these as distinct sorts of value is that it is coherent to claim that the same work is artistically valuable, or good *qua* art, and aesthetically disvaluable—e.g., ugly, dissonant, or otherwise unpleasant to experience—or vice versa. For example, Krzysztof Penderecki's *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima* (1960) is arguably a great work of music but is dissonant and hard to listen to, and many of Diamanda Galás's works, such as *Shrei X* (1996) or *Vena Cava* (1993), give their listeners intentionally unpleasant and harrowing aural experiences⁶⁷ that are even harder to listen to than Penderecki's but are arguably great works of musical and performance art.⁶⁸ Moreover, these works would arguably be less artistically good if they were more aesthetically pleasing to listen to since they would lose much of their expressiveness. On the other hand, a generic pop song may be catchy and pleasing to the ear in its melodies and hooks while having little to no artistic value, a landscape photograph may be pleasing to look at in its colours and composition without having artistic value as a photograph, etc.

While artistically good artworks may also have a high degree of aesthetic value, the latter would seem to have no bearing on the work's status or value as art except in cases where the work's aesthetically valuable features are also connected to what makes it a work of art, and to determine this we would need to appeal to, or at least to presuppose, some understanding of what makes something art. On any account that distinguishes art from mere technique or craft, artistic value will be similarly distinct from what we can call technical value or good craftsmanship, which we can understand as the construction and arrangement of materials so as to successfully

⁶⁷ The former work consists almost exclusively of choreographed screams, vocalized in pitch darkness when performed live, that is meant to be expressive of—and to protest—the physical and psychological pain suffered by victims of political torture. The latter work is an hour-long vocalization of the internal stream-of-consciousness of a person dying of AIDS-related dementia, which is also meant as a protest work, giving voice—literally and forcefully—to those who are unheard and overlooked.

⁶⁸ Cf. Davies 2014 for a discussion of films that, he argues, are intentionally made to be 'unwatchable', or more precisely to be as difficult for viewers to watch—physically uncomfortable, disorienting, or emotionally unpleasant, etc.—as possible. While he is not primarily concerned with the question of aesthetic value here, it is implicit in Davies's discussion that these films are artistically good but would count as *aesthetically* disvaluable on traditional notions of the aesthetic as pertaining to beauty or sensory pleasantness.

achieve some end. These would include the ends that Collingwood associates with the forms of craft he discusses, such as arousing certain kinds of emotions in an audience or producing a representation that succeeds in resembling its subject. For example, the fact that the events of a novel's narrative are arranged in an order that renders them gripping and suspenseful, or that a piece of music succeeds in relaxing listeners through its use of certain tempos, timbres, and harmonies, or that a painting depicts its subject in photorealistic detail, etc., could be admired as an exhibition of its maker's technical skill, but this need not necessarily add to its value as a work of art if whatever makes it art is distinct from what makes it a work of craft.

Lopes rejects the possibility of grounding a theory of artistic value in a theory of art (Lopes 2011, 524-25). However, he considers only aesthetic theories, institutional theories, and Levinson's historical theory of art, so if his argument works it does so only to discount these theories from being able to serve as the basis for a distinct theory of artistic value, and not every possible theory. I agree with Lopes that the last two theories do not entail a position on what makes something a good work of art as they define art, and that on the first theory what makes something good *qua* art collapses into aesthetic value, but since the account of art I am developing is distinct from these theories it avoids Lopes's argument and so there is no reason not to look to it for what it might say about artistic value.

From the definition of 'artwork' given above—viz., the expression of a qualitative element of an experience or set of experiences, which emerges from an artist's intentional and directed interaction with a medium and which is embodied in that medium—it follows that a good artwork will be one that succeeds in expressing, and hence articulating or clarifying, the qualitative dimension of some experience. Since expression is understood to be necessarily mediated and to emerge from the artist's working in and with a medium, a successful expression will be one that articulates or clarifies the expressed quality *well* in the resources of the medium in which it is expressed. Thus, what the artist does with her medium will be relevant to her work's artistic value, albeit not in the same way that this is relevant for its technical value, since

what the artist does with a medium in the course of expressing something in that medium does not include manipulating the medium so as to bring about a pre-determined end.⁶⁹

Because expression, as Collingwood insists (*PA*, 111), does not admit of technique since there is no fixed way to use a given medium so as to generate an expression that is specifiable in advance and independent of the particular quality that is being expressed, what exactly will be involved in successfully expressing one's felt experience in a given medium will vary from case to case. However, we can say that a successful expression will allow for the quality expressed to be apprehended clearly, just as we can say that successfully articulating an idea in language will allow others to grasp that idea even if we cannot specify how language should be used to do this independently of a particular idea. Thus, we can say that whatever features of a work play a role in successfully expressing the qualitative dimension of the experience in question will count positively towards the artistic value of that work, i.e., will be 'artistically good-making features'. In other words, an aesthetically valuable property of a work or a property that counts towards the work's technical value—e.g., the gracefulness and softness of a line in a sculpture, or the fine details in a carving done in a delicate material that is difficult to work with—will also count as an artistically valuable property if, and only if, it contributes to that work's expressiveness.

Two worries can be raised here: first, that defining artistic value in terms of successful expression leads to the problem of there being no bad art, and second, that we have no way of knowing whether a work is a successful expression since whether what someone did with a medium counted as the working out and articulating of a qualitative dimension of their experience, or whether they were using the medium's resources as a means to realize a pre-envisioned end, is not something that can be seen, heard, or otherwise determined simply by perceiving their finished work. With regard to the first worry, it might seem that if something is to be counted as an artwork only if it expresses the qualitative element of an experience, every artwork will be good *qua* art since to express something just is to succeed in expressing it, where

⁶⁹ Both artistic value, so defined, and technical value are forms of *achievement value*, with what is achieved in the latter case being the realization of an end through the employment of some determinate means, while in the former case what is achieved is the expression of what, and how, some experience was like to have.

a failure to express is not an expression. The solution is to note that ‘expression’ can be taken as both a threshold concept—where something either expresses or it does not—and to admits of degrees once the threshold has been met. This entails that every artwork will have some degree of artistic value in virtue of being an expression, with works that express the qualitative dimensions of an experience to a greater degree being more successful expressions and so having higher artistic value. This allows for artistically better and worse artworks, but one might still wonder if it allows for truly bad art with no positive degree of artistic value: i.e., it would seem that anything that fits this description would not count as art on my definition, since it would not express. I would argue that it does, with something being ‘bad art’ in this sense if it is a failed attempt at expression, or if it is put forward as a successful expression when it is not.

This seems plausible if we recall the distinction drawn above between ‘art’ and *art*: works of *art* that stand apart from others in their medium as having something ‘more’ may stand out in part because they realize a different kind of value, where this is not just a matter of realizing the kinds of value that works of ‘art’ can realize—e.g., aesthetic or technical value—to a greater degree. It is also plausible that works of ‘bad art’, i.e., failed attempts at expression, will not be *art* at all, although they may be ‘art’. The question becomes: what makes for greater success in expressing; i.e., in virtue of what will an artwork realize a higher degree of artistic value? If expressing is understood as articulating and clarifying the qualitative dimension of an experience, disclosing it or making it manifest for consciousness, it follows that an expression will be more successful insofar as it brings out and articulates this quality more clearly, e.g., by disclosing it in greater nuance or depth. Since the expressed quality is not merely a property that can be treated in isolation but is the pervasive ‘colouring’ of the experience as a whole, an artwork that accounts for and discloses this experience more fully, e.g., by articulating more dimensions of the situation (in Dewey’s sense) in which the experience arises, will count as a more successful expression than one that articulates fewer elements of the overall situation.

Since the situations from which experiences and their qualitative dimensions arise are understood on this account as interactions between a subject and its environing world, a more

successful expression will not only articulate or disclose the quality as being the quality of some experienced object but will include in its disclosure an awareness of the artist's relation to it as the 'subject-pole' of the interaction. For example, this could be a matter of the expression including an awareness of how this relation to the experienced objects affects or shapes the experience that the artist has of them, and not just of these objects and the felt quality alone. Disclosing a felt quality as internal to a subject's relation to the elements of her situation, and not as belonging to these elements as an 'objective' property independent of this relation, is part of the 'subjective' character of art which, I argue, is misconstrued—to the detriment of taking art seriously—when understood on a Lockean or Cartesian subject-object dichotomy.

Moreover, since expression is necessarily carried out in a medium, part of the artist's experience will include her experiences of working with the medium, which means that some degree of self-reflexivity in the expression will be artistically valuable since this will express more aspects of the experience from which the quality emerges: we might say that every *great* work of art will disclose something of the medium in which it is made as well as something of the artist and the world. Cézanne's paintings are a good example of works that realize both these subjective and self-reflexive aspects in their expression, with, say, one of his landscape paintings of a view of Mont Sainte-Victoire expressing not only the felt quality of his visual experience of looking at this landscape, as this was shaped by his troubles with his eyes and the anxiety this caused his otherwise nervous temperament,⁷⁰ but his experience of trying to get clear on this quality through his use of the medium of painting.

Having a general sense of what a successful expression will involve—e.g., that it will disclose aspects of both the artist's subjectivity and the 'objective' elements of her situation as these interact to form an experience and the particular qualitative dimension thereof, and as these are further developed through the artist's interaction with her medium—can help us to answer the second worry, viz., that we cannot recognize, and so judge the success of, an expression

⁷⁰ See Merleau-Ponty 1945 for a discussion of the relation between Cézanne's health and temperament and what he expressed through painting. Cf. Collingwood's similar remarks on Cézanne's expressiveness in *PA*, 146-48.

without independent knowledge of the experience and the quality it expresses. This is because success in expressing is not a matter of the expression corresponding to a prior feeling: rather, it is a matter of the artist's articulation of a feeling or quality 'ringing true', so to speak, to the complexities and characteristics of concrete experience as it is lived. In other words, we do not need to be able to verify that the quality or way of experiencing that is expressed was something the artist 'really felt' directly, whereas as long as we know or assume that the expression is not accidental but was deliberately and consciously worked out by the artist we are warranted in taking the quality expressed to be that of what Collingwood calls the artist's 'total imaginative experience', i.e., the understanding of that quality which she developed and articulated to herself in making the artwork. And we can judge this understanding, and the 'total imaginative experience' that the artist developed in the course of working out her initial direct or 'psychical' felt experience, for how true it is to the nature and structure of actual lived experience.⁷¹ Analogously, we do not need to have witnessed an event first-hand to be able to assess the credibility of someone's description of it that we hear second-hand, and to judge whether it 'rings true' to how events tend to play out, how people plausibly act and react, etc.

A successful expression—one that rings true in this way—will embody an understanding of experience that is dynamic and flowing rather than static and with what de Beauvoir calls the opacity and ambiguity of life (*LM*, 270), and it will present the significance of the experiences and qualities expressed in a similarly dynamic and open manner rather than reducing them to single, fixed meanings, with meaningfulness being perspectival and multivalent.⁷² Also, since each experience and feeling is a new particular that is unique to its occasion, which may resemble others in various respects but will never be generic, an expression that expresses the feeling of experience authentically will be original, with clichés and received understandings counting against the success of an expression and thus an artwork's value *qua* art. Because it is

⁷¹ This point is similar to Aristotle's claim that poetry describes the kind of thing that might plausibly happen, whereas history is the description of what did happen (Aristotle 1984b, 1451^a36-1451^b11), although here the focus is on experience rather than action.

⁷² Cf. Sontag 1966, and her view of the meaningfulness of an artwork as something qualitative and felt rather than intellectual.

the originality of the expression, specifically, that will count positively towards a work's artistic value, the subject-matter of a work can be unoriginal or even generic so long as the perspective or 'take' on it that the work expresses—i.e., the *way in which* it is felt, perceived, experienced, etc.—is new. For example, if a painter paints a person or scene that has been the subject of other paintings, it can be original if what he paints presents a new way of apprehending its subject, where this can be a matter of giving us a new way of seeing or feeling about the subject—e.g., showing a new aspect of the subject's character—, or it can include the work exemplifying a new way of using the medium to present a subject.

If these are the kinds of characteristic that make for successful expression, it follows that the appreciation and evaluation of artworks will require more than simply perceiving a finished work's manifest properties, since the distinction between a perceptible form that embodies an expression and one that is a product of craft will not be apparent from merely looking at it, listening to it, etc. For instance, apprehending and judging the originality of a work will require some art-historical knowledge of what has already been done and of what ways of experiencing or feeling have already been expressed in that medium. Such a judgment will always be fallible, since no one will have knowledge of everything that has already been done, but the fact that one would likely lower their assessment of a work's artistic value if they were to learn that the work was less original than they had previously thought, given new knowledge of other works that have already done what the work in question does, suggests both that originality is a plausible component of artistic value and that judgments of artistic value are themselves fallible and dependent on the judge's knowledge and experience. Similarly, judging that the way of experiencing or feeling a work expresses 'rings true' or is authentic to the character of concrete lived experience rather than presenting an intellectualized abstraction or caricature of experience will require the one judging to bring an awareness of this character of experience with them to their encounter with the artwork.

This points to one of the respects in which engaging with an artwork is a necessarily 'hermeneutic' activity, not only in that it involves interpretation and understanding but because it

involves what Gadamer (1989) would call a ‘fusion of horizons’ wherein the audience understands the work in virtue of the ‘horizon’ of prior understandings and experience they bring to it. As expressions, artworks clarify the qualitative dimensions of particular experiences, allowing us to apprehend and understand them as they are articulated, and in doing so they add to and further clarify our sense of the character of experience in general—i.e., of our situatedness in, and ways of relating to, the world—although they do not give us our initial understanding of this but instead build on and develop it. This is one of the sources of the values *of* art that will be discussed in the following sections. It follows that someone who has no reflective awareness of the character of their felt experience or their ways of being-in-the-world and relating to things will be unable to apprehend, let alone evaluate, works of art as expressions and so will not realize their value. This is plausible, but such people will likely be rare, with few having no awareness of their experiences: this lack of (self-)awareness resembles what Collingwood calls the “corruption of consciousness” (*PA*, 282-85), where Collingwood similarly argues that one with a corrupt consciousness will not be able to tell whether he or anyone else has expressed themselves successfully, but adds that “nobody’s consciousness can be wholly corrupt” unless they are entirely detached from reality, since nearly everyone will have some veridical experiences and an awareness of what they feel on at least some occasions (*Ibid.*, 283).

Adding to and developing the audience’s awareness of experience and thereby expanding their hermeneutic, affective, and cognitive horizons is one way in which artworks could be said to ‘act on’ those who engage with them. On this account, as for Gadamer, the hermeneutic relation works both ways, where one of the ways that audiences can ‘act on’ or affect works of art is by realizing their value in both senses of ‘realize’ (i.e., as registering and as making real). It is in line with taking artworks to be processes that develop or ‘become what they are’ through the disclosing actions of artists, and from an understanding of successful expressions as having something of the opacity and ambiguity—i.e., the ‘thickness’—of the experiences they express, that the success of an expression, and so the value of a particular artwork, will not be ‘given’ all at once when the artist has finished her work but will continue to be realized as the work is

experienced by others and as they disclose additional aspects of it. Since artistic value is based on successful expression, and since part of an expression's success lies in its being understood by at least some others,⁷³ an artwork's value depends in part on its audience's 'uptake'.

This is plausible with respect to artistic practice, since an artist will likely see her work as unsuccessful if no one ever 'gets it', i.e., apprehends it as the artist did when she deemed it finished. It follows that artworks can *become* artistically valuable, or good *qua* art, rather than having their value as a property that is fixed from the moment of their creation, where this is consistent with the Bergsonian notion of the future retroactively affecting the past to say that a work 'will have been good' once it is realized as such by a viewer, listener, reader, etc., just as Bergson argues that a possibility "will have been possible" once it has been realized (see *CM*, 82). While this may initially seem counterintuitive, it helps to make sense of talk of artworks being 'ahead of their time' or of an artist coming to realize that a work of theirs was better than they thought when they created it, and it is preferable to positing a value that the work has from the beginning as an objective property since that would entail the possibility of an artwork being good but having its artistic value never realized by anyone, which seems implausible and is pragmatically vacuous.⁷⁴

7.3 The Cognitive Value of Art as Expression

As mentioned above, the account of art I am developing here is a unified account insofar as what artworks are—viz., disclosive expressions—grounds both artistic value and the ways in which art is important or has value cognitively, morally, and socially. Specifically, the nature of artworks as expressions that articulate or disclose the qualitative dimensions of experience is the basis of the cognitive benefits of making and engaging with art and of the moral and social dimensions of these activities, as well as being the basis of artistic value as discussed above. This is because, by

⁷³ Similarly, we might think that a sentence successfully articulates an idea only if someone understands the idea due to reading or hearing the sentence.

⁷⁴ That is, if the meaning of a claim is the difference it would make to experience if it were true rather than false, with claims for which there would be no difference being meaningless, as both Peirce (1878) and James (1907) argued, it is not clear what the claim that there might be this sort of unrealized value could mean.

disclosing an aspect of a pre-conscious experience so as to make it available for conscious apprehension and understanding, a work of art makes us aware of what that particular experience is like to have from the perspective the work embodies, which is an awareness not only of a new feeling, quality, or experience—given the status of artworks as (at least partly) unique creations and the particularity of experiences and felt qualities—but of a new *way of* feeling, perceiving, or experiencing. In this way, artworks expand the hermeneutic, cognitive, and affective horizons of those who apprehend them as expressions or articulations, where this includes both the artist and the work’s audience⁷⁵ and where the fact that artists, through their work, make possible this expansion of others’ horizons gives the creation of art an irreducibly social dimension as a form of what Peter Goldie calls “emotional sharing” (Goldie 2008, 192), which contributes to communal well-being and solidarity and so has moral, social, and political dimensions.

The cognitive value of art on this account just is the cognitive value of the expansion of horizons that art characteristically effects when apprehended as expression. This goes beyond some of the ways in which cognitive value has traditionally been conceived in debates on this topic, e.g., by Jerome Stolnitz (1992), who takes cognitive value to be a matter of giving propositional knowledge through statements or depictions that are true insofar as they correspond to how things are in the world external to the artwork,⁷⁶ or by Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, who argue against the view of art as “conveying or teaching or embodying universal truths about nature, the human condition, and so on, in a sense at least analogous to that in which scientific, or psychological, or historical hypotheses can express general truths” (Lamarque and Olsen 1994, 6). While I agree that art cannot be a source of knowledge in these senses, since an artwork cannot itself demonstrate that what is true internally to it as a work—e.g., what might be

⁷⁵ Or rather, this includes the artist as her work’s first audience-member; cf. *PA*, 247-51, 300-02.

⁷⁶ Stolnitz’s focus on ‘truths’ such as “stubborn pride and ignorant prejudice keep attractive people apart”, where this is supposedly what is to be learned from *Pride and Prejudice*, is arguably a straw-man in his argument that artworks cannot provide non-trivial knowledge, since proverbs and ‘old saws’ such as this are not all that aesthetic cognitivists contend can be learned from art. That is, Stolnitz seems to ‘cherry-pick’ the already trivial in order to imply that art cannot be the source of more substantial truths without ever showing that it cannot be, only that it is not in certain cases.

true within the fictional world of a narrative—is true of anything outside the work,⁷⁷ it is not clear why this should be taken to exhaust what counts as cognitive value. While, in one sense, the nature of artworks as expressions on my account entails that they give artists knowledge of what they feel and give audiences who apprehend these works as expressions knowledge of what an experience was like for the artist *qua* ‘expresser’, I argue that their cognitive value goes beyond giving knowledge *that* so-and-so’s experience had such-and-such a felt quality.⁷⁸ Here I am in agreement with recent calls to broaden the notion of ‘cognitive value’ to include “enriching [one’s] conceptual scheme, developing [one’s] imaginative capacities, [and] sharpening [one’s] moral sense” (Vidmar Jovanović 2019b, 19), as well as forms of knowledge other than propositional knowledge-that, e.g., “know-how (skills), phenomenal knowledge (knowledge what it is like to experience something), conceptual knowledge, [and] knowledge of values and of significance” (Gaut 2006, 115; see also Gaut 2003).

Since artworks, on my account, express and thereby share an awareness of our relation to the world as subjects or ‘experiencers’ (perceivers, feelers, etc.), of the world as run through with experienceable qualities, and of how these qualities can be meaningful, art would seem primarily to offer what Gaut calls phenomenal knowledge and knowledge of significance. Moreover, since artworks not only express felt qualities but also the *ways of* feeling or experiencing that are involved in apprehending such qualities, and not only the meaningfulness of things and experiences but also the *ways of* taking these things to be meaningful, art can be a source of knowledge-how: viz., of how one can relate to the world in certain ways, e.g., how to apprehend,

⁷⁷ See Davies 2016 on the distinction between truths that are internal to a work and truths that hold beyond it; cf. Davies 2015a on the related notion of a ‘fidelity constraint’ on writers of non-fiction that authors of fiction, and by extension artists in other mediums, lack. See also Gibson 2007, 3: “if an attempt to transcribe how things are in the world does not guide an author’s pen, then how could the product of that pen’s activity cast light on the world? ... [T]he very idea of writing a work of imaginative literature ... seems incompatible with the notion of fidelity to the world, of bearing witness to it.”

⁷⁸ As was explained in the previous sections of this chapter, what the audience comes to apprehend—and so, to know—in apprehending a work as an expression is not the artist’s immediate ‘psychical’ feeling or experience but this experience as it is mediated—i.e., articulated in a medium—, which is to say, their experience as they themselves came to consciously apprehend it through working it out. This gets around the objection that one can never really know another’s private, subjective experience: what is known here, *qua* mediated, is ‘public’ rather than ‘private’, and *intersubjective* rather than ‘subjective’, or at least is inherently publicly *sharable* even if no one but the artist ever does happen to share it.

imagine, and understand things from certain perspectives. This fits the notion of ‘phenomenal knowledge’ so long as this is not understood to be knowledge of an objective property of a thing or an experience—i.e., *the* look or feel that something has ‘in itself’—but as knowledge of what it feels like to experience it from a particular perspective on a particular occasion. This makes the phenomenal knowledge that art offers us neither ‘objective’ nor ‘subjective’, but knowledge of a particular interaction between a subject and the world, and of the qualities that emerge in this interaction. The view that art can be a source of knowledge-how with respect to how to imagine, feel, etc., should also be qualified, with knowing-how not being understood in terms of ‘skills’, or at least not in the sense of knowing a method to employ in order to achieve some end.

What art can give us might not count as knowledge on stricter definitions since it is not universal or generalizable to all cases of a certain kind. Where, e.g., a painting or a song can let us understand what an event or object feels like to someone who is depressed, jubilant, etc., it does not give us knowledge of how other events or objects of this kind *will* feel to anyone in such a mood, but only of how they *can* feel. Likewise, where a novel can make us aware of the meaning that a particular event in its narrative has within a certain context, it does not give us knowledge of what events of that sort *will* mean in similar contexts but only of how they *can* be taken to be meaningful. The awareness here is of particulars in their particularity, although it transcends the particular in certain respects. For one thing, it is intersubjective insofar as it makes a particular experience, quality, or perspective available for others to imaginatively take up and understand. For another, although it is not generalizable it is still generally applicable: even if an awareness of what a particular experience was like will not tell us how other experiences of a similar sort *will* be, by making us more aware of a greater range of possibilities of how they *could* be and of ways of perceiving, feeling towards, or otherwise ‘taking’ things it positions us to get more out of these other experiences: e.g., to understand them from more than one perspective or to realize multiple senses or meanings they can have.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ For example, becoming aware of how one image can be seen in more than one way, say, a duck-rabbit, gives us a way of engaging with other images that can be applied, for instance, to seeing both aspects of a Necker cube.

Because what an artwork expresses on this account includes the artist's experience of working with a medium, apprehending and appreciating an artwork will involve understanding how the artist made use of their medium to express both a particular way of experiencing things and the felt quality of this experience. Even if the way the artist used the medium is unique to this instance of expression—i.e., to the quality expressed and the artwork that expresses it—, understanding this adds to our stock of examples, as it were, of how felt experiences *can be* articulated and conceptualized, which better prepares us in general to become conscious of and understand our own experiences and feelings on future occasions. Whether or not we count this as knowledge, it has cognitive value in the ways that Vidmar Jovanović outlines since it enriches one's conceptual scheme, or 'horizons', and develops one's imaginative capacities by having one imaginatively take up new perspectives and grasp what it is, or can be, like to experience something from these perspectives.

The notion that art's cognitive value largely has to do with giving us new perspectives on things that add to our understanding of them is also advocated by James Young in *Art and Knowledge* (2001), where he discusses the ways artworks provide "interpretive illustrations" (Young 2001, 80ff), i.e., ways of understanding things and events or perceiving them *as* something or other, and "affective illustrations" (*Ibid.*, 88ff), i.e., ways of qualitatively registering things and of taking an emotional stance towards them or feeling something about them. Young's view of art's capacity for these cognitive benefits involves his characterization of artworks as what he calls 'illustrative demonstrations' as distinct from the kind of semantic or logical demonstration that is related to the provision of knowledge in fields such as science, history, etc. Unlike semantic or logical demonstrations—i.e., demonstrating that something is the case by giving reasons for believing that it is, such as citing statistics from which one can infer it—, an "illustrative demonstration", Young writes, "places one in a position where one can recognize something", i.e., can perceive that it is the case (*Ibid.*, 68). This fits with the idea of disclosure, since another way of saying that artworks offer interpretive and affective illustrations of how things feel, look, etc. when experienced from certain perspectives is to say that they

disclose these things and their qualitative dimensions from these perspectives, which they make available for audience-members to take up by embodying them in a medium.

Where my account differs from Young's is with respect to his claim that artworks "can provide illustrative demonstrations of the *rightness* of a perspective" (*Ibid.*, 69, my emphasis), since it is not clear how an artwork could illustrate that a certain way of understanding or feeling towards something is the way that it 'should' be understood or is the way that one 'ought' to feel about it. This would seem to need to be confirmed by trying out the perspective in question in further experience beyond the experience that the work of art gives, rather than something that could be established internally to the work itself, going back to the anti-cognitivist point that an artwork cannot confirm or give evidence to prove that the way it presents things is how things actually are (Stolnitz 1992, 196-97; Gibson 2007, 3). For example, two novels could portray radically different perspectives on the same subject, with one expressing, say, the excitement and nobility of war while the other expressing the brutality and degradation of war, where it is not clear that one of these works must be less successful an expression in virtue of being wrong about its subject-matter or how one novel could demonstrate that the other's perspective was wrong. Rather, both—assuming they are artistically good, i.e., are successful expressions—will show how war *can be* experienced from different perspectives, where the appropriateness or correctness (whatever the latter might mean here) of taking up one or the other perspective in real life would need to be judged on extra-artistic factors.

While I agree with Stolnitz on this point, this is not a problem for my view that art has cognitive value since my account does not understand this value as a correspondence between the way the work presents its 'content' and the way things are in the world. It is not because artworks resemble or mirror reality that they can be sources of knowledge, understanding, or awareness:⁸⁰ rather, it is because they disclose, by example or 'illustrative demonstration', what

⁸⁰ Here my account contrasts with the view put forth by Dorothy Walsh in *Literature and Knowledge* (1969), who argues that art can be true of the world in virtue of resembling things in the world. *Pace* Walsh, we would need to know how the world is in order to recognize this resemblance, and so, while a work might present us with a veridical view of something it depicts, we cannot *know* that it is veridical from the work alone.

it is like to experience something from a certain perspective, where the perspective itself might be mistaken with respect to how it intends or characterizes that thing without it being any less true that the thing in question has a certain quality, i.e., looks or feels a certain way, when experienced from that perspective. By analogy, knowing that parallel lines can be seen as converging when viewed from a certain angle, or that a stick appears bent when seen half-immersed in water, has cognitive value even though these perspectives could be said to misrepresent their objects: for instance, it makes us more aware of how our perceptual faculties operate and of the ways in which how we experience things can be affected by contextual or environmental factors, perhaps making us more able to spot other optical illusions and to avoid being misled on future occasions. Similarly, knowing that, e.g., war *can be* experienced as exciting or noble has cognitive value even if we think that this perspective mischaracterizes war: knowing this not just abstractly as propositional knowledge but concretely from the inside—i.e., by imaginatively entertaining this perspective for ourselves—gives us a better understanding of how pro-war propaganda affects people and so of how it works, where this knowledge would be important for combating it or resisting its effects.

My account also goes beyond Young's in taking art's cognitive value to consist in more than just making available new perspectives, new ways of feeling and experiencing things, and new ways of making sense of things or finding them meaningful. Artworks would have these benefits in virtue of embodying artists' discoveries of new forms and qualitative aspects of experience, but because artworks are also taken to be creations on this account, they also stand as examples of our capacities to imaginatively transcend familiar perspectives and received meanings in order to relate to and make sense of our experiences in new and creative ways, and even to create new ways of feeling and experiencing things. As such, artists serve as role-models for what de Beauvoir would call our freedom by exercising this freedom in their expressive activities in a way that others can partake in, disclosing not only the qualitative dimensions of experience and the meanings they can hold for us, and how a medium can be used to clarify what one feels and to enrich experience, but also our nature as what she would call disclosers of being.

By apprehending an artwork as an expression, then, we are not only made aware of the quality it expresses but also that we can be active shapers of experience and creators of meaning rather than being limited to merely recognizing meanings that are already there in things, since artworks will exemplify the use of this human capacity and since, in being able to register what the artist expressed, we can recognize ourselves as sharing this capacity. That is, we can recognize what de Beauvoir would call our own transcendence by the fact that we recognize—i.e., *re-cognize*—the artist’s transcendence in understanding what they created. In this way, artworks can be sources of self-knowledge and knowledge of others, insofar as they can make us aware of how an artist came to understand and articulate their experience and can thereby make us aware of ourselves as able to disclose and understand experiences as the artist did.⁸¹

The idea that artistic expression makes new ways of experiencing things and new ways of finding them meaningful available to others, and that this expands their possibilities for action, is similar to Bergson’s claim that “the satisfactions which art [can] provide” include “reveal[ing] to us, beyond the fixity and monotony which our senses ... at first perceived ... [the] ever-recurring novelty [and] the moving originality of things”, and that this gives us “greater strength” and intensifies “our faculty for acting” since it makes us aware not only of the dynamism and possibility of novelty inherent in the world but of our own capacities for creation (*CM*, 86).⁸² Revealing genuinely new—and not just as-yet unknown—meanings and ways of seeing, feeling, etc. could be seen as a way of revealing the novelty and originality of the world in which we find these meanings, take up these perspectives, and have these experiences. And insofar as this widens the scope of our future experiences and possibilities for action, art can also be seen as a “preparation for the art of living” (*Ibid.*), as Bergson claims his philosophy of intuition is, since

⁸¹ This is analogous to the way that Collingwood takes historical understanding to be a source of self-knowledge, since understanding the thought embodied in a past action makes us aware not only of what another person was capable of thinking but also of ourselves as capable of thinking it. See *A*, 114-15: “In re-thinking what somebody else thought, [the historian] thinks it himself. In knowing that somebody else thought it, he knows that he himself is able to think it. And finding out what he is able to do is finding out what kind of a man he is.”

⁸² While Bergson is writing here about the benefits to be realized by a philosophy based on his method of intuition, which he compares to the beneficial effects that art can have on those who engage with it, as with the analogies to art in Bergson’s work that I discuss in Chapter 3 above his comparison to art here shows that he takes art to be valuable in this way, even if his main purpose was to argue for the value of intuition-based metaphysics.

the cognitive benefits of engaging with art go beyond the encounter with the artwork itself or any particular piece of knowledge that it might give, being part of the development or *Bildung* of the artist's whole horizon and character.

These ways that art can be cognitively valuable, and especially the sense in which a viewer or listener who apprehends an expression is one of a community of 'disclosers of being', so to speak, and makers of meaning to which the artist also belongs, are also at the root of the ways that art can be morally and socially valuable.

7.4 The Moral and Social Value of Art as Expression

Discussions of art in relation to moral or social-political value tend to focus on either the moral or political *content* of artworks or the moral or political *uses* of art. Examples of the former focus include the question of whether the moral value or disvalue of an artwork's content and the attitude towards this content that the work exhibits count towards its aesthetic or artistic value. This question is the core of the debate between 'autonomists', who deny that moral value affects artistic value positively or negatively, and 'moralists', who argue that immoral content can count against a work's artistic value and that moral content can count positively towards this value. Among analytic philosophers of art, discussions of works' political content often falls under the moralism/autonomism debate, with positive or problematic political content being treated as moral or immoral, respectively, in examples commonly referenced in this debate, e.g., Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935). Outside of philosophy, evaluating and critiquing the political content of artworks and the ideologies implicit in how this content is presented is common in art history and branches of cultural studies such as film studies or English literature, as well as in the work of non-academic critics and reviewers.⁸³

⁸³ That the entries for "Art and Morality" (Kieran 2003) and "Art and Ethics" (Gaut 2001) in the Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics and the Routledge Companion to Aesthetics, respectively, deal exclusively with the debate between autonomism and moralism suggests the dominance of this focus in current work on art and moral value in analytic aesthetics. See Devereaux (1998) for an extended discussion of *Triumph of the Will* in the context of this debate. For influential examples of ideology- or identity-based critiques of painting and popular media, see Berger (1973), Ryan and Kellner (1988), and hooks (1996).

As examples of the latter focus, Lydia Goehr lists “the production of propaganda art and the uses of images in mass media; the use of the arts in identity politics and political demonstration; institutional histories and [issues] in the marketing and consuming of art products[;] ... censorship[;] and international law pertaining to the return of stolen art” (Goehr 2003, 471) as political dimensions of artistic practice that can be evaluated: e.g., critiquing a totalitarian state’s use of propaganda, or praising certain media images for their representation of historically marginalized groups. Regarding moral value, this latter focus can be seen in claims of art’s benefits for the development of moral character such as those found historically in Kant (1793) and Schiller (1795)⁸⁴ and more recently from Martha Nussbaum (1985; 1990), Iris Murdoch (1994), Matthew Kieran (1996), Elaine Scarry (1999), and Elizabeth Trott (2007), among others. Although these claims are not usually framed in terms of a use to which art can be put, the idea is that the moral value of art is linked to the beneficial effects that engaging with art has on our dispositions to act morally and our desire for justice: thus, they tend to view the moral value of art as instrumental, with this value deriving from the moral value of what it can lead to.

The ways in which artworks can be morally or politically valuable when understood as expressive disclosures and creative discoveries go beyond both of these approaches, since they locate this value in the content of a work or in the potential effects of engaging with it whereas my account locates it in artworks and artistic practices themselves. In other words, on the account of art I am developing, the creation and reception of artworks—i.e., the activities of successfully expressing the felt quality of one’s experience and of apprehending something as an expression in this sense—can *themselves* be morally and socially valuable. I should note that this view of art’s moral and social value is not in opposition to the other, more common views discussed above, although it does entail a reconfiguration of the moralism/autonomism debate as will be discussed at the end of this section. My account is consistent with the view that engaging

⁸⁴ See, e.g., Kant’s claims that a developed aesthetic sense and appreciation for natural beauty is a sign of a morally good character (5: 299-99) and of beauty as a “symbol of morality” (5: 351-55), and Schiller’s claim that “the moral condition can be developed only from the aesthetic” so that “it is through Beauty that we arrive at Freedom” (Schiller 1795, 110, 27), with freedom being connected with the autonomy exercised in moral reasoning.

with art can play a beneficial role in moral development, although I will not argue for this view here since my interest is in exploring a further, less frequently discussed way in which art can be morally and socially valuable.

One reason that creating art, on this account, is itself morally valuable is because successful expression exercises certain ethical virtues on the part of the artist such as honesty and courage, insofar as successfully getting clear on what one feels or on some element of one's experience requires being honest to oneself about one's experience and one's relation to the object thereof, as well as courage not to avoid or leave out elements of one's experience that may be unpleasant to acknowledge. This relates to Collingwood's claim that art is the opposite of, and even a cure for, the 'corruption of consciousness', which can be understood as a form of self-deception involving repressing, bowdlerizing, or projecting some aspect of what one feels that one finds unpleasant or threatening and does not want to face as one begins to become consciously aware of it (see *PA*, 217-21). While Collingwood's claims that the corruption of consciousness is "the true *radix malorum*" (*Ibid.*, 285) and a "sheer ... undifferentiated evil, evil in itself" (*Ibid.*, 220) might seem exaggerated, it is plausible that this form of self-deception is not only epistemically but morally disvaluable since a falsified picture of one's situation will likely lead to mistaken moral judgments—e.g., overlooking someone's blameworthiness or projecting this blame onto a scapegoat—which will impede one's ability to act morally. Even when acting morally is not in question, being dishonest to oneself about what one feels or being afraid to face unpleasant truths in one's experience is plausibly morally disvaluable in itself,⁸⁵ where this suggests that an honest articulation of one's feelings to oneself, which successful artistic expression exemplifies, is morally good in addition to any further goodness that may be realized by the judgments or actions to which an honest awareness of what one feels might lead.

This way in which the creation of art, *qua* successful expression, can be morally valuable applies whether or not the artwork/expression is publicized or shared with others, since here it is the artist's honesty with herself about her experience—i.e., her *self*-expression—that is held to be

⁸⁵ Cf. MacKenzie 2018 on the moral disvalue of self-deception.

morally valuable. There is a further kind of moral value to be realized in creating art to be shareable with others, since while an artwork's capacity to expand the horizons of those who engage with it as audience-members is a cognitive value, as discussed above, helping others to realize this cognitive value is itself morally valuable. In other words, making new ways of perceiving, feeling, and understanding or finding meaning available to others, and thereby enriching their experiences and opening up future possibilities—including the affordances they have for acting in future situations in which they perceive and understand more than they might otherwise have—is plausibly a morally good thing to do since it enhances their well-being and expands not only their cognitive horizons but their freedom.

This is partly what Goldie is getting at by claiming that “emotional sharing” is part of human flourishing on a virtue-based account of artistic value (see again Goldie 2008, 192), although my account extends this to “perspectival sharing” more broadly so as not to limit it to emotions *per se*, since the felt qualities that artworks express on this account include, but go beyond, emotions. This value is at once social and moral, since it is a matter of sharing the expansion of horizons and the enrichment of experience and understanding that comes with disclosing new meanings and new ways of seeing, feeling, etc., so that this cognitive benefit is realized collectively rather than merely individually. And, since no one is in principle excluded from becoming part of a work's audience, even if some may need more background knowledge of the artistic or cultural traditions within which an artist is working than others, this collective for whom the work introduces new possibilities for experience potentially extends not only to the whole of the artist's culture but to the whole of humanity.

While this might sound utopian when framed in the abstract, I would argue that it is plausible in light of examples of artworks in particular cultures that do, in fact, work to expand the perspectives, the ways of seeing or feeling, and the meanings available by which to understand events and experiences of audiences from other cultures. Many of the films of Yasujiro Ozu, for example, such as *Late Spring* (1949) and *Tokyo Story* (1953), allow non-Japanese viewers to imaginatively entertain and understand certain ways of feeling towards

family and familial relations that, while not necessarily shared by all Japanese people, arise within and are informed by a Japanese cultural context which they nevertheless transcend. By giving viewers an understanding of what it is like to feel this way ‘from the inside’, so to speak, these films do more than any sociological or journalistic report about these cultural traditions and practices and the values that motivate them, which could be a source of knowledge *that* people in a certain culture commonly do certain things for certain reasons, but would not give us the same sense of *what* it is like to feel or relate to others in these ways. The opportunities afforded by art not only for understanding other individuals’ ways of taking things but for cross-cultural understanding are another aspect of art’s social value, since apprehending works by artists from other cultures and eras as expressions entails gaining an understanding of the cultural or historical context that informs the perspectives, feelings, and understandings expressed.

This social and moral dimension of art follows from taking art, *qua* expression, to be a form of disclosure in de Beauvoir’s sense. In her 1944 essay “Pyrrhus et Cinéas” she writes of the inherently social dimension of human transcendence and freedom, insofar as we need others to be disclosers of being in order to actively will ourselves to disclose being and so to realize our freedom authentically. “I need [others],” she writes, “because once I have surpassed my own goals, my actions will fall back upon themselves, inert and useless, if they have not been carried off toward a new future by new projects”, and so “through other[s], my transcendence is always prolonged further than the project I am now forming” (de Beauvoir 1944, 135). Reciprocally, one’s disclosures further the transcendence and freedom of others, with one who discloses new possibilities and meanings “resembl[ing] the leader of an expedition who marks out a new route for his march and who constantly goes back to gather up the stragglers, running forward again to lead his escort further on” (*Ibid.*, 138). This gives us a conception of the artist as a kind of ‘pathfinder’ who discovers, by creating, new ways of relating to and experiencing the world that do not belong to her alone but are added to the stock of general human possibilities. For de Beauvoir, the moral value of being such a ‘pathfinder’ lies in the expansion of others’ concrete freedom as well as one’s own, where, according to her ethics, the core of any moral action is that

in so acting one wills one's own freedom along with the freedom of others (*EA*, 71-73; cf. Arp 2001, 68-74; Daigle 2006, 126-27).

If the creation of art is a morally and socially valuable pursuit for these reasons, engaging with artworks and apprehending them as expressions is similarly morally and socially valuable for audiences, in addition to the cognitive benefits that audience members stand to gain by having their horizons expanded with new ways of feeling, perceiving, and understanding as explained above. This value lies mainly in the ways that apprehending and appreciating a work of art as the expression of the artist's felt experience, as they have come to understand it through articulating it in a medium, and so knowing what the experience was like to have, exercises the audience's capacities for qualitative discernment along with their affective and imaginative capacities for empathy and intersubjective understanding.

This is similar to the arguments for the benefits of art for moral character development from thinkers like Nussbaum and Murdoch, since many of their claims are based on the ways in which reading, viewing, or listening to art can give us practice in empathizing or 'unselfing' by taking us out of our own interested perspective and giving us a sense of what experience is like for another, as well as practice in attending closely to particulars in the manner that Murdoch calls "loving" perception (Murdoch 1971a, 16-22, 36-37, 41-42; Murdoch 1971b, 82-86, 89; cf. Murdoch 1992; Nussbaum 1985).⁸⁶ The difference between this way of locating art's moral value and the one I propose is that typical discussions of this issue from Nussbaum, Murdoch, and others tend to focus predominantly, if not exclusively, on the audience's attention to and empathy with the content of artworks: e.g., with the characters in a dramatic narrative. In other words, the view here is that art's moral value lies in its ability to present us with *fictional* scenarios or models on which to practice empathizing and attending closely, where this practice is held to be morally valuable insofar as it better prepares or disposes us to empathize with, attend to, and respond to *actual* people and events in our moral lives outside of our engagements

⁸⁶ Note the similarities between Murdoch's notion of a 'disinterested', non-instrumentalized form of close attention to particulars that she takes to give us a truer perception of things as they are and Bergson's notion of intuition.

with art. This partly explains the near-exclusive focus on literature and other representational or depictive forms of art in these discussions of art's moral value, since it is not as obvious how non-representational artforms such as abstract painting or instrumental music can give us practice exercising our capacities for empathy and attention to details of situations that are morally salient when they do not depict characters with whom to empathize or situations to which we can attend.⁸⁷

However, on the account I am proposing, apprehending and appreciating an artwork *qua* expression involves empathizing with the artist's felt experience and perspective thereon and paying close attention to the form of the embodied work as the result of the artist's engagement with her medium, where attending to the artwork in this way is itself a way of attending to what the artist did in making it, i.e., to her 'performance' of mediated expression. As such, engaging with artworks as expressions is not merely practice for moral attention, feeling, and response but is itself a way of actually relating to another person—viz., the artist—and of attending to an actual event or situation—viz., one's encounter with the work, and through it, the artist's encounter with her medium—in a morally and socially positive way. In other words, whereas the common view of art's moral value regards artworks as being like a pilot's 'flight simulator' for our moral capacities and dispositions, my account regards engaging with art to be like an actual test flight: whereas even the most successful session on a flight simulator can only ever be good practice for 'the real thing' and cannot count as an actual flight, a successful test run of a plane can count as both good practice and an instance of good flying.

To summarize the above, creating artworks that express the felt or qualitative dimensions of a particular experience and thereby sharing with others a new way of feeling, perceiving, or understanding the world is morally and socially valuable, exercising certain virtues such as courage, honesty, and generosity while benefiting others by expanding their horizons and their possibilities for experience and action. Additionally, appreciating artworks as expressions and so

⁸⁷ Note the similarities between this focus on literature as a privileged source of moral value among artforms because it depicts persons and their actions and reactions to events—i.e., the core elements of the sphere of moral life—and Sartre's privileging of prose over poetry as capable of political engagement as discussed in Chapter 4.

sharing a sense of what experience is like for others and, if not necessarily endorsing or adopting their ways of feeling or understanding, coming to understand them by imaginatively entertaining them, is morally and socially valuable as an instance of empathizing with and understanding others' perspectives and experiences. It also involves the kind of close attention to things as particulars—which Dewey calls 'really looking' rather than merely recognizing (see *AE*, 24)—that is arguably at the heart of justly and ethically relating with others, insofar as justice is a matter of recognizing others as they are and regarding or treating them in ways that are appropriate or fitting. This leads to a further dimension to the social or political value of this sharing of perspectives, since getting clear on what others' experiences are like for them is plausibly a necessary part of any authentic and substantial—as opposed to abstract and performative—solidarity with others, over and above empathy.⁸⁸

This view of art's social value accords with and helps make further sense of Collingwood's claim that art, as the clarification and articulation of what one feels, is "the community's medicine for ... the corruption of consciousness" (*PA*, 336). A society's health and flourishing is plausibly tied to the understandings that are embodied in its cultural products—including artworks, along with works of philosophy, theology, myth, etc.—with these contributing to its self-conception, i.e., to the common meanings or shared understandings by which its members make sense of the community of which they are members and of themselves in relation to this collective.⁸⁹ If these embody a 'corrupt' consciousness in Collingwood's sense—e.g., by repressing or bowdlerizing the experiences of those who belong to that culture, or by substituting received or static understandings for the unique particularities and dynamism of their lived experiences—this will limit the ways of feeling, understanding, and experiencing that are part of this community's shared or common 'horizon', which in turn will restrict their collective sense

⁸⁸ These ways in which creating and engaging with artworks hold value are in addition to any value that the kinds of imaginative engagements with the content of artworks that Nussbaum, Murdoch, et al. write about might have for moral character development.

⁸⁹ On the notion of culture as a community's self-understanding, see Scruton 2007, ix-x, 2; on the notion of common meanings or shared understandings by which the members of a culture make sense of events, see Armour and Trott 1981, xxiii-xxiv; Taylor 1985a, 272; and Taylor 1985b, 35ff.

of what is possible, e.g., in terms of political action or policy, or of ways of engaging with and relating to others. On the other hand, if the products that comprise a community's culture successfully express the felt experiences of those who make them, this will add to the ways of feeling and understanding that are part of that community's shared horizon, thereby expanding its sense of what is possible.

Although the idea of the corruption of a community's consciousness is somewhat vague, Collingwood's concern with this, his characterization of it as a moral and social problem of the utmost gravity, and his desire to find sources of resistance to it are understandable in light of the context in which he was writing: viz., the rise of fascism in Europe in the decade leading up to what would be World War II. It is plausible that this rise was due, at least in part, to a collective tendency to repress, deny, or project onto others elements of the felt dimensions of their experiences, e.g., in the way that warranted economic anxieties were misdirected and projected onto members of ethnic or religious groups that had nothing to do with the real sources of this anxiety. While no medicine guarantees complete effectiveness as a cure, it is still plausible that a robust artistic practice will be politically beneficial for a society. For 'closed', e.g., totalitarian societies, the sharing of perspectives and understandings of felt experiences can work against tendencies towards fascism or authoritarian dogmatism by giving a sense of alternative ways of taking things and of multiple possible meanings and values, as well as by resisting reified or static general understandings of individual persons or events. For 'open', e.g., liberal democratic societies, a robust practice of making and engaging with artworks as expressions can enhance the pluralism and diversity for which this openness allows, in principle if not always in practice, bringing minority perspectives to public awareness and giving a more honest collective self-understanding insofar as the felt experience of any of that society's members are not repressed or bowdlerized but are acknowledged as feelings and perspectives that are elements of that society, where acknowledging elements that may be socially dangerous is necessary for addressing them.

The basic implications of this view of the political value of art have already been discussed towards the end of Chapter 4 in relation to de Beauvoir's and Sartre's positions on engaged or

committed literature. On this view, a work's political value will not lie in the political value of the content it might depict—e.g., in the characters or events that form a fictional narrative—or in the perspectives and feelings that it expresses, but rather in the success and authenticity of its expression. Thus, while praise or critique of the political dimension of a work's overt content—e.g., how it represents characters from certain identity groups, which ideological positions a narrative implicitly favours, etc.—may be warranted with respect to the work *qua* amusement, propaganda, rhetoric, educational resource, etc.—which is to say, *qua* craft—, it will not, strictly speaking, be relevant to the work *qua* art or to its artistic value. It follows that a work that contains a political message that is seen as praiseworthy—e.g., one emphasizing the values of collective action or advocating solidarity with an oppressed group—could be politically disvaluable *qua* art insofar as the feelings and experiences grounding this message are not successfully expressed: e.g., if they are presented through clichés or sentimentalized or simplified presentations of motivations and interactions.⁹⁰ Likewise, a work that presents events from a problematic political perspective—e.g., a narrative whose protagonist engages in politically motivated violence or unjustly discriminates against certain others, without the work overtly condemning these actions—might be politically valuable *qua* art insofar as it successfully expresses what it is like to feel about and understand the world in these ways as an example of an uncorrupted consciousness of this dimension of political life that can offer a corrective to the 'corrupted' understanding that underlies these problematic feelings and perspectives.⁹¹

⁹⁰ For example, Ken Loach's film *I, Daniel Blake* (2016) arguably contains a positive social message by depicting the financial and mental-health-related problems facing low-income or 'working class' people as a result of austerity-based government policies and bureaucratic over-regulation, and so could be politically valuable as a work of 'magic'. However, it is arguably not politically valuable *qua* art since it presents an overly simplified and sentimentalized view of its characters and their problems, with every working class character being a relentlessly put-upon saint and every middle class character except one being a caricature 'bad guy', and so it fails to express an uncorrupted consciousness of the social problems it addresses in their complexity and nuance, or 'ambiguity'.

⁹¹ This view of an artwork's political value not lying in the overtly political elements of its content has a similar orientation to Adorno's view that this value lies in a work's artistic form rather than its content (see Adorno 1970) although on my view it is not a work's form, understood as something separable from its content, but its nature as an expression, that is the locus of this value. My view here is also similar to, and helps to clarify, Marcuse's claim that all artworks are revolutionary—and hence, for him, politically valuable—regardless of their overt political content insofar as they restructure consciousness and show that multiple alternative ways of understanding a situation are possible (see Marcuse 1978, 44-53, 72-73).

Similar implications follow for the debate over the relevance of a work's moral value to its artistic value, since an artwork could depict content or express perspectives, feelings, etc. that are immoral but be artistically valuable provided it successfully expresses what these feelings and perspectives are like to have, or what the content is like to experience from some perspective. Likewise, a work's content, or the feelings and perspectives it depicts, might be morally good and the work be artistically bad if it does not successfully express these feelings or perspectives and betrays a 'corrupt' or naive consciousness of what is morally good and why. Thus, on my view, the moral status of the content that a work depicts or the perspectives and feelings that it presents for its audience to imaginatively take up and entertain is separate from, and does not affect, its value *qua* art. However, this does not make my view an 'autonomist' view, or at least not as conceived within the context of the current debate between moralism and autonomism, since the autonomist position takes moral value and artistic value to be entirely unrelated and not to interact, whereas my view takes these values to be importantly related although not in the way the 'moralist' camp of the debate takes them to be.

This is because both positions in the debate treat a work's moral value as a potential constituent of its artistic value along with other types of value that might together comprise its overall artistic value. Writing in defence of moralism (or as he calls it, 'Ethicism'), Gaut is explicit about this, stating that Ethicism "holds that there are *a plurality of aesthetic* [read: artistic] *values*, of which the ethical values of artworks *are but a single kind*" and arguing that "[t]here is reason ... to spurn the restricted diet of aesthetically [read: artistically] relevant properties offered by ... narrow ... formalist views, *and as yet no reason to exclude ethical properties from a heartier menu*" (Gaut 1998, 183, 185, my emphasis). The presupposition that moral or ethical values are candidates for the 'menu' that comprises a work's overall artistic value is shared by others in the debate, including autonomists, whose disagreement is only over whether or not they are in fact on the menu, so to speak.⁹² In contrast, my view takes the artistic

⁹² For other prominent contributions to the debate that presuppose the same potential relation between moral and artistic value, see Anderson and Dean 1998, Carroll 1996, Eaton 2010, and Jacobson 1997.

value of a work to be relevant to its moral value *qua* artwork such that good artworks, i.e., successful expressions, are morally valuable or praiseworthy and bad artworks, i.e., failures to successfully express some feeling or quality, are morally disvaluable even if there are other non-artistic dimensions of these works that have a different moral value: e.g., a work that is morally valuable when apprehended *qua* artwork and morally disvaluable when treated as amusement or propaganda, or vice-versa.

This reconfiguration of the relation between artistic and moral value holds for the other values of art on my account: the fact that an artwork succeeds as an expression, and so is artistically good, will be what makes it cognitively or socially valuable *qua* art—i.e., in ways that are distinctly related to its being art⁹³—rather than the fact that a work might be cognitively or socially valuable being what makes it good *qua* art, and vice versa for artistically bad works and their cognitive or social disvalue *qua* art. This provides a new way of approaching issues related to these values of art⁹⁴ and so has the potential to introduce new perspectives into other debates in addition to the moralism/autonomism debate in the way that has been outlined above.

7.5 Explanatory Value and Implications for Practice

In this chapter I have presented the fundamentals of a unified account of the value of art that follows from the account of the nature of art developed in Chapter 5 by synthesizing views from Collingwood, Dewey, Bergson, and de Beauvoir, where this account of art's value similarly draws on and synthesizes their views on this issue. That chapter not only outlines this account and shows how it avoids certain objections—in particular, objections to counting artworks as both creations and discoveries, and common objections to expression-based theories of art—but

⁹³ This holds specifically for the moral, cognitive, and social value or disvalue of works *qua* art, since there might be other ways in which a novel, film, painting, song, etc. can have cognitive, moral, or social-political value that do not relate to its being a work of art in these mediums and which could equally be had by a work of mere craft. For instance, it might have moral or social value *qua* amusement, or cognitive value in virtue of being a source of knowledge about the history of a certain artistic technique or tradition, in the way that one might learn about, say, cubism or the conventions of Noh theatre by studying particular cubist paintings or Noh performances.

⁹⁴ Or at least one that is new to recent philosophical discussion: this way of conceiving the relation between artistic value and these values of art is implicit in Collingwood's aesthetics, as Christopher Dreisbach (2009) shows with respect to moral value.

also explains why this account is worth developing as part of the current landscape of philosophical aesthetics and situates it in relation to other positions within this landscape, arguing for its advantages as a contender alongside these views and showing how and where it differs from views to which it is similar. I have not sought to prove definitively that this account is superior to all others, as this would be unrealistic and hubristic to attempt in a dissertation; rather, my aim has been to show that the account is plausible and that, insofar as it brings to light or sheds new light on ideas from some historically important thinkers, it is philosophically important and interesting.

Because I have only had space to present the basics of this account as necessary to present it clearly and coherently and to show how it relates to the positions of the four thinkers on whom I draw, there are a number of other questions and problems in the philosophy of art for which my account can offer answers and solutions but which I am not able to address here. These include questions such as when, if ever, a work of art is finished (see, e.g., Hick 2008; Livingston 2008), or how to explain multiply instantiable artworks—e.g., novels *qua* literary works as distinct from particular printed books, films *qua* cinematic works as distinct from particular prints or screenable copies, etc.—without reifying abstract kinds, or ‘types’, alongside concrete particulars, or ‘tokens’, as entities in one’s ontology (see, e.g., Margolis 1977; Walters 2012; Davies 2013). Showing how the account applies to theoretical problems such as these will be a way to further clarify the account and its entailments and to demonstrate its plausibility and usefulness by introducing a new and, hopefully, fruitful perspective into an ongoing debate or by introducing new considerations in support of an existing position.

The philosophical problems and issues to which my account can be applied are not limited to those addressed by analytic philosophers of art, which I have restricted myself to dealing with here in order to keep to a manageable length. Because the thinkers whose ideas the account synthesizes cut across the boundaries of the analytic-continental ‘divide’, it is well positioned also to contribute to inquiries into art in the continental tradition, e.g., by putting it into dialogue with and testing its implications for historical and contemporary views that cover similar

territory: for instance, Merleau-Ponty's writings on art and expression (see, e.g., Merleau-Ponty 1945; Merleau-Ponty 1961), Jacques Rancière's work on the political dimensions of art (see, e.g., Rancière 2011), and Nicolas Bourriaud's work on relational and social aesthetics (see, e.g., Bourriaud 1998), to name only a few. And this is not to mention its applicability to work that does not fit neatly into either analytic or continental traditions but draws from both, as well as from the American pragmatist tradition, such as Mark Johnson's ecological and embodied aesthetics of experience (see, e.g., Johnson 2007).

The 'cash value' of my account, as William James would put it, goes beyond potentially fruitful dialogues with established theories and debates in philosophy. Because it offers a unified account of the nature and value of art, according to which the ways in which art is valuable are grounded in artistic value, which is in turn grounded in what artworks are, it also has explanatory value and practical implications for creating, engaging with, and valuing art as well as for art education. This explanatory value and applicability to practice are tied to the ways in which the account meets the expanded pragmatic constraint proposed in Chapter 1.

Whereas Davies's version of the pragmatic constraint is meant to apply specifically to the ontology of art by holding that theories concerning artworks' metaphysical kinds must be based on, and be answerable to, our best reflective understandings of our critical and appreciative practices regarding art, the expanded version of this principle proposed in Section 1.3.2 is meant to apply to all philosophical theorizing about art. Recall that the expanded version asserts that *any position or conclusion argued for in the philosophy of art should (i) work as a possible answer to a question that could arise for a philosophically reflective practitioner from their artistic practice, and (ii) make some difference for how that practice is pursued or for how art is engaged with and experienced*, where this includes how artworks are valued and promoted.

With respect to the first condition, the distinction that my account makes between what I have referred to as 'art' and *art*—i.e., between items produced in certain mediums that are commonly associated with art but which are not themselves artworks, and those that are artworks, with this roughly mapping onto Collingwood's distinction between 'craft' and 'art

proper’—allows my account to answer the question of whether a novel, dance performance, painting, film, sculpture, etc. is ‘really art’, where this question can arise both for reflective creators and audience-members in the course of their engagements with such things. In contrast, other accounts of art, especially those which understand art on a broadly institutional framework, will be unable to offer an answer to this kind of question since, for these theories, anything that is made in an established art form by someone who presents themselves as an artist and who intends what they make to be encountered or appreciated as artworks are, and which is treated in the way that artworks are treated by, e.g., being displayed in a gallery or performed in a concert hall, will be an artwork. Since this question can arise in practice—e.g., someone might wonder if something they have produced is an artwork, and not merely a film, poem, etc., and a spectator might wonder if a painted canvas they encounter displayed in an art gallery is ‘really’ an artwork and not just a painted surface—, and since it admits of ‘no’ as a possible answer, an account such as mine that can make sense of this question and can give a way of answering it will have more explanatory value—at least for this aspect of our artistic practices—than an account that cannot, and so it will meet the first condition of the expanded pragmatic constraint.⁹⁵

My account also meets the second condition of the expanded pragmatic constraint insofar as it can usefully inform our practices of creating and appreciating art. For one thing, it can guide our engagement with and experience of artworks by giving us a sense of which elements of a work are the salient ones for us to attend to in order to apprehend and appreciate it as an artwork: i.e., how each of the various parts of a work relate to each of the other parts, and to the whole work as an organic unity or *Gestalt* rather than just the sum of these parts, in a way that contributes to the pervasive quality that the work, as a whole, expresses. Since the account also defines what it is for something to be an expression, it can let artists know what sorts of things to watch for in order to avoid substituting clichés and received meanings or interpretations of experience for an authentic understanding of particular experiences and their qualitative

⁹⁵ Note that this allows my account to be useful for assessing the arthood of things that are put forth as wholly new, or avant-garde, kinds of art: e.g., radically ‘free agents’ or very ‘hard cases’. This is because it tells us what it takes for anything to count as art, while leaving it open just how any particular work will so count.

dimensions, and so can help artists avoid unintentionally passing off a work of ‘art’ as *art*. It can also let audiences know which of a work’s elements will count towards appreciating it as art, and so towards judging its artistic value, by guiding them not to focus just on the ‘content’ or the ‘form’ of a work but on how these elements work together to articulate a felt quality.

Moreover, since expression, artistic value, and the values of art are all connected on this account it can also guide those who are in a position to promote the creation and reception of artworks by funding their production or their preservation, restoration, etc. by suggesting criteria by which to select certain works for promotion over others when a choice has to be made, e.g., due to limited funds. Since this kind of promotion of art, especially when it is publicly funded, is motivated by the importance or value that engaging with art has for the robustness of a culture, along with the benefits of this engagement for individual spectators, my account’s linking of artistic value to these other values entails that it would be more worthwhile to fund, preserve, etc. works of *art* over works of ‘art’—e.g., mere entertainment—, and more artistically valuable artworks over ones with less artistic value, i.e., less successful expressions.

In keeping with the account’s Collingwoodian and Deweyan understanding of expression, these practical applications will not be applicable in a ‘technical’ way, e.g., by giving artists, spectators, or evaluators anything like a formula or method to follow such as a list of determinate features that make something an expression or a set of specifiable outcomes to aim for when creating art. Because it takes expressions, like the qualitative experiences they express, to be unique and unforeseeable particulars, the account will inform practices of artistic creation and appreciation by giving a broad sense of how practitioners should be oriented in their engagement with what they are making or appreciating and of the kinds of things they should avoid doing. This includes treating the process of creating or engaging with art as one of discovering new and as-yet unrealized ways in which things can be meaningful and not seeking to impose already known and familiar meanings onto a work. For example, it follows from the account that artists should be concerned to attend closely and honestly to the felt, qualitative dimensions of their experiences when making art, including their experience of the medium they are working with,

and to the felt or qualitative coherence of the work they are bringing into being, rather than focusing primarily on the content of the work they are making, or being concerned with what this content ‘means’ according to a particular framework, e.g., Freudian psychoanalysis, and making their creative choices on the basis of such meanings.⁹⁶

Likewise, it follows that audiences and evaluators should engage with works perceptually, affectively, and intuitively—in Bergson’s sense—and seek to apprehend the particular pervasive quality that the work is expressing and the particular way the artist expressed it in her medium, rather than engaging with them on a primarily intellectualized level, e.g., by treating a work as a system of symbols to decode or by being primarily concerned to apply a known theoretical framework to a work in order to interpret it rather than being open to how a work can affect them and to how it can give them new experiences and new ways of understanding. It also follows from the account that one will be more likely to apprehend a work as an artist’s expression if one’s experience is informed by an awareness of the artist’s creative process, including any artistic tradition(s) in which the artist might have been working; thus, engaging *well* with art as will involve more than just perceiving its manifest perceptual properties. The difference here is between one who merely sees the shapes and colours of, say, Picasso’s *Les Femmes d’Alger* (1907) and one who has the background knowledge to be able to see it *as* influenced by African sculpture, *as* depicting prostitutes waiting in a brothel, etc., where the latter’s informed seeing is better positioned to apprehend the work as Picasso’s expression, which in turn better positions one to judge its artistic value and to realize its cognitive or moral value.

It also follows from my account that funding agencies tasked with supporting the creation of art would do better not to base their decisions as to which projects to fund on pre-worked-out plans or proposals that artists submit which describe, in detail, what the works they will create

⁹⁶ Cf. Sontag 1966, 9: “Ingmar Bergman may have meant the tank rumbling down the empty night street in *The Silence* as a phallic symbol. But if he did, it was a foolish thought.” Many of the implications of my account for the activities of the artist and spectator that I mention in this section are in line with Sontag’s call, at the end of her essay, to replace “a hermeneutics” of art with “an erotics of art” (*Ibid.*, 14), although I should note that her sense of ‘hermeneutics’ here is different from the broader way in which my account, like Collingwood’s and Dewey’s thought, could be considered hermeneutic in a Gadamerian sense.

will be like and what they will do. Although such a plan can be devised in advance for a work of craft, it cannot be for a work of art that is both a novel creation and a result of a process of inquiry or discovery. Since the main reason for funding art, especially with public money, is that art is thought to be valuable for both individuals and the community, it would make sense to fund works of *art*—i.e., successful expressions—, which are cognitively and socially valuable as outlined above, rather than works of ‘art’ that are merely craft-products. Thus, it does not make sense for works to be funded based on a criterion that pertains to craft but not to art. In fact, if my account of the nature and value of art is right, it would not make sense for funders and patrons to try to base their support on any measure that required knowledge of a work, including whether or not it will be a successful expression, before it is made. This does not, however, leave funders without anything on which to base their decisions: if my account is right, it would make more sense to fund artists over time rather than individual projects, and to base this funding on an artist’s past successes in expressing, along with promoting general conditions of openness and freedom within which artistic expression is most likely to occur while accepting that nothing can guarantee that any funding or support *will* result in a good artwork.

The fact that the specifics of any work of art are not foreseeable in advance also suggests that formulas should not be used in art education, and that where craft and technique are taught it should be with an eye to giving students enough familiarity with a medium to begin to explore and improvise in it. Likewise, if my account is right, arts educators should not assess or judge works based on their adherence to pre-specified outcomes or established models but should be receptive to apprehending what particular thing a student is working towards expressing whilst they are in the process of expressing it, in order to be able to instruct them in how they might best proceed to bring the developing expression to fruition. This calls not only for close, empathetic attention and the ability to apprehend what someone is doing while they are in the midst of doing it, but also calls for something like Bergsonian intuition, with the instructor needing to get on the work’s wavelength, so to speak, and perceive the work that is coming into being from within its development, seeing the directions in which the work is tending, etc.

These last points are meant to suggest ways in which the understanding of art and its value contained in the account I have developed in the three chapters in Part II can usefully apply to and inform art-related practices. While there is much more to say on each of the above points, my aim has been to say just enough to show that my account meets the second condition of the expanded pragmatic constraint and not only addresses questions about art that might arise from experience but can offer answers that tie back into and usefully inform experience. While more needs to be done to flesh out and defend my account further, I hope to have outlined the fundamentals of it here in a way that is both coherent and plausible, and to have shown the potential value both for philosophical aesthetics and for artistic practice if the account should be shown to be not only plausible but correct.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 Summary

My overarching aim in this dissertation has been to explicate the basics of an account of art that provides answers to the following questions: What makes something count as art? What it is for something to be good *qua* art? Why is art valuable? And how is the answer to the first question related to the answers to the second and third? I have done this by drawing on the views of four thinkers, clarifying their stated views on art and bringing out and developing the understanding of art implicit in their thought (Part I), and synthesizing the commonalities and compatible elements in their views into an account of artworks as expressive disclosures, i.e., articulations of ways of feeling or ‘taking’ things, and of their value thereas (Part II). On this account, the ways of feeling that artworks articulate are both created and discovered in the making of the work, where the *work* of art is the process of expressing or disclosing by working in and with a medium, with the work’s embodiment in a medium being understood as a phase in this process.

As explained above (Section 5.4), this account is not meant to apply to everything that might get called ‘art’, whether in ordinary language or in the specialist discourses of professional art critics, curators, etc., but is meant to apply to those things among the broader category of what is called ‘art’—and possibly also to some things outside this category—that stand out as distinct in some way such that it would be natural to say ‘now *that* is art!’, or to ask ‘is what I’ve made really *art*?’. Importantly, the distinction here is not meant to be merely one of degree of value—e.g., picking out particularly good works of ‘art’—but picks out a difference in kind, where this difference brings with it a difference in kind of value, i.e., in what it is to be good *qua art* as distinct from what might make something good *qua* ‘art’.

In Part I, Chapter 2 argues against the prevailing interpretation for a non-idealist reading of Collingwood's theory of art by noting the compatibilities between Collingwood's account of expression and Dewey's notions of inquiry and qualitative thought. When Collingwood's remarks on art are read through the lens of these ideas of Dewey's it highlights the fact that, for Collingwood, the artist's expression is necessarily a process of engagement and interaction with a medium, where this medium is always public and, in principle, externalizable even in cases where no externalization in fact takes place or, in Collingwood's phrase, where expression occurs 'in the head'. Reading Collingwood through Dewey's ideas helps to clarify the metaphysical framework within which Collingwood's remarks on art are made and to show that this framework is incompatible with the ideal theory that is (mis)attributed to him.

Chapter 3 focuses on the use that Bergson makes of examples of art and artists' activities, especially in *Creative Evolution*, and argues that these examples reveal an implicit account of art and its creation that takes artworks to be organic unities that are analogous to organic life forms in their organization and in the process by which they come to be created. This implicit account of what artworks are has further implications for why art is valuable for human life and culture, as well as offering an explanation not only of what artworks are but of why art is a part of culture in the first place: viz., that it is itself a manifestation of the vital impetus that Bergson posits to explain the coming-to-be and evolution of biological forms. This makes the implicit Bergsonian account of art a naturalistic one that sees art as continuous with and inherently bound up in human evolution and the overall development of life, which gives us a naturalistic account that is neither physically reductive nor materialist without being 'immaterialist', and which gives us a way of viewing art on evolutionary lines that is an alternative to existing Darwinian and evolutionary-psychological approaches.

Chapter 4 examines de Beauvoir's views of literature as a disclosure of new understandings and forms that authors both create and discover through their process of writing, as an alternative to Sartre's argument for 'engaged' or politically committed literature, where this alternative clarifies what it is for literature—and, by extension, art in general—to be 'authentically' engaged

and political as opposed to a vehicle for the delivery of a pre-determined message. Although Sartre's theory of literature and his argument for why good literature must be politically engaged at the level of its content takes up the bulk of this chapter in terms of length, the primary focus is on de Beauvoir's ideas, since it is her account and not Sartre's that contains elements of the view of art that is shared by Collingwood—read through Dewey—and Bergson. Synthesizing these ideas from de Beauvoir with those from the other three as developed in the preceding two chapters adds to and helps to clarify the implications of their views of what art is for the ways in which art is valuable, especially in regards to its social or political value.

Where the chapters in Part I each focus separately on an art-related issue in the thought of a different thinker or pair of thinkers, those in Part II draw on the views of these thinkers, as brought out and explicated in their respective earlier chapters, in order to develop an account of art that is compatible with their individual views but which goes beyond these to 'flesh out' certain aspects of their individual accounts, and so to give a more comprehensive and robust synthesis of their views. Chapter 5 focuses on explicating the view of what artworks are that is common to the thought of the philosophers discussed in Part I, explaining where different elements of this account are drawn from their individual views. Since the account is an expression-based one, I show how the account differs from traditional, Romantic expressionist theories of art and so avoids objections that are regularly raised for expression-based theories.

Chapter 6 discusses how this account compares with a number of other contemporary theories of what artworks are, showing where it is similar to and where it differs from these other theories. While it is not my aim in this chapter to argue conclusively for the superiority of the account I develop over other theories, with respect to the areas of difference between these theories and my account I make a case for the plausibility and the advantages of the latter, e.g., for its ability to overcome certain limitations or objections that these accounts face.

Where these two chapters focus on the ontological side of the account, i.e., what art *is*, Chapter 7 looks to the axiological or value-based side, working out the implications of the view of what artworks *are* for their artistic value, i.e., what makes an artwork good *qua* art, and for the

value *of* art, i.e., the ways in which the creation and reception of art has cognitive, moral, and social or political value. One of the strengths of my account is that it gives a unified account of the ontological and value-based dimensions of art, insofar as the same aspects of art that ground its cognitive, moral, and social values also ground artistic value, with both being grounded on what art, on this account, *is*: expressive disclosure and creative discovery.

My approach in this dissertation, and the structure of the chapters into these two parts, is an example of what I call ‘synthetic philosophy’ in the methodological section of my introduction. This approach centers around gaining a better, i.e., more comprehensive understanding of some phenomenon, topic, issue, etc. by considering multiple perspectives on that phenomenon and bringing together, or synthesizing, the compatible elements in these perspectives into a broader, more synoptic perspective on the phenomenon in question that includes more of its aspects than any of the perspectives that are synthesized covers on its own. This approach works along the lines suggested by the parable of the blind men and the elephant, in which each person, feeling only a part of the elephant, forms an idea of the whole animal that is inaccurate but is based on a partial truth. A perspective that includes each of the individually felt parts will give a more accurate idea of what the whole animal is, whether this is the perspective of a sighted person looking at the elephant from far enough away to see the trunk, the ears, the legs, etc. and their relation to each other, or the perspective of another blind person who, assuming the men all to be touching the same animal, forms an idea of the whole on the basis of a synthesis of all the descriptions. Likewise, I contend that one way to better understand a phenomenon or topic with respect to its philosophical aspects—e.g., questions relating to ontology and value—is to bring together the compatible elements of attempts by different philosophers to account for that phenomenon, assuming that each is giving an account of the same thing and that, as intelligent and reflective thinkers, each will not be wholly wrong in his or her account of it.

Since this approach to philosophy aims at a more comprehensive apprehension of its object of inquiry rather than at final, all-encompassing knowledge of it, it is essentially hermeneutic, aiming to advance within—but not get outside of—the hermeneutic circle of understanding

rather than to arrive at the terminal point of a linear inquiry or argument. This is why it has not been my aim in this dissertation to present a conclusive argument for why the account I develop should be accepted as *the* ‘one true theory’ of artworks and their value, and why I have instead aimed at making a case for why this account is a plausible contender alongside other going accounts, and why it is of philosophical interest or importance.

8.2 Directions for Further Inquiry

One virtue of this ‘synthetic’ approach is that it widens the potential for this dissertation to contribute to existing scholarship and philosophical thinking about art. By focusing on distinct—though related—issues and questions as they arise within the thought of a particular philosopher, the chapters that comprise Part I each stand to contribute to the scholarship on that philosopher and their own aesthetics. For instance, Chapter 2, taken on its own, adds to the arguments of Ridley and Davies that Collingwood does not advocate an ideal theory of art, contrary to received opinion, but is properly understood as holding a different view. Moreover, since this chapter argues that Collingwood’s actual view of art is broadly compatible with Dewey’s holistic and ‘organicist’ or ‘interactionist’ philosophical framework rather than with idealism, there is room to explore the connections between Collingwood’s theory, as I have explicated it, and Dewey’s own aesthetics. And, since Bergson and de Beauvoir did not explicitly develop aesthetic theories in the way Collingwood and Dewey did, with the result that relevant ideas of theirs are not often acknowledged by philosophers of art or considered in debates in aesthetics, Chapters 3 and 4 can serve as a basis to develop their own accounts of art further, to explore the relation between these accounts and the rest of their philosophical output, and to make their contributions to aesthetics more widely acknowledged.

In addition to these contributions to scholarship on these thinkers, the account that I have synthesized from their ideas stands to contribute to a number of areas and debates within the philosophy of art generally insofar as it is a general account of art and its value. For one thing, Chapters 5, 6, and 7 already contribute to debates surrounding the definitional and ontological

questions of what makes something count as art and what kind of thing, metaphysically speaking, an artwork is, as well as to questions of artistic value and the value or importance of art for human life and culture. Covering these fundamental issues of aesthetics as they do, these chapters can serve as a basis on which to develop positions on a variety of specific debates within these broad areas. For example, the ontological side of the account has implications for issues such as: the nature of creativity in art as extrapolated from a theory of artistic creation the grounds for and importance of the distinction between originals, forgeries, and fakes, and questions such as when, if ever, an artwork is finished, or the place and status of ‘outsider art’, to mention only a few. Likewise, the axiological side of the account has implications for debates surrounding the difference between aesthetic and artistic value, the relation of moral and artistic value beyond the moralism/autonomism debate as discussed in Chapter 7, and questions pertaining to the social and political place of art, including currently pressing questions surrounding issues such as cultural appropriation and the removal of monuments and statues—again, to mention only a few.

In keeping with my commitment to the expanded pragmatic constraint, as formulated in the methodological half of my introduction, these questions of art’s value and importance on which my account can weigh in have practical applicability as well as theoretical interest, insofar as an understanding of artistic value and the values of art can inform practices such as the funding, preservation, and rewarding of artworks—e.g., awards such as the Giller or Booker prizes for fiction—and the criteria on which these are decided. This is not to mention the potential implications the account has for methods in art education and for support for the place of the arts in school curricula. Some of these areas where there is potential for practical application, and some of the further theoretical issues and debates to which my account can contribute, have been discussed briefly in the above chapters but, as is fitting for a processual and hermeneutic theory, much more still stands to be fleshed out and developed further from the foundations that this dissertation lays.

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